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THE DREAM-CHARLOTTE

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A STORY OF ECHOES

BY

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OR

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CHAPTER I.

THE CONFABULATION.

"THAT little Airelle!"

The last heavy calèche had rolled out of the courtyard; along hot, dusty roads, east, west, north, south, trotted the sturdy Norman horses, bearing their freight of girlish spirit and beauty from the cloister to the world. Did any bewitching face look back on the swiftly vanishing home of so many years? Sighed some for the serene existence within convent walls, each season a copy of forerunner, each, if free from exhilaration, yet free from real sorrow? Handkerchiefs had been waved, kisses blown, farewells reiterated, as the lofty iron portal was flung wide, then closed with knell-

like reverberation through the vast quadrangle.

The sound seemed to symbolize the life of those left behind, — cloistered votaries on whom prison doors would never open.

Whilst their pupils sped homewards, every pretty head full of day-dreams, spiritual mothers and teachers chatted of this favourite and that, of successes, of failures also in the class-room. Many a woman's destiny they now forecast, reading in the maiden of to-day the wife and mother of to-morrow, nor did they confine speculations to the fireside and matters of the heart only. The world indeed, its prizes and temptations seemed uppermost; here, also, life being regarded as a game of chance, all honour due to the winner!

In an upper chamber commanding a magnificent perspective sat two nuns thus occupied. Both wore the coarse gray serge of the humblest lay sister in the buttery — the crosses and rosaries at their girdle had cost a few sous; there was nothing to distinguish them from scores of the same sisterhood, — nothing, yet everything! The pair would have attained eminence in any calling, one by virtue of char-

acter, the other by force of intellect. Both were oldish, but consciousness of power is an amazing rejuvenator. Existence so uniform as to appear automatic has advantages. Once the wrench made, the world given up, rendered microscopic by four walls, there is less wear and tear than outside. Exaggerated personality compensates for narrowed sympathies. These two women had doubtless found here a more varied, more interesting sphere of action than was possible under normal conditions. Matrons, they would have ruled a mere household; reverend mothers, they governed a community, pupils, novices, foundlings, and lay serving folk, — made of this conventual establishment a second, lesser town.

The lady abbess, or Mother Superior as she was called, evidently belonged to the noblesse, could boast of an ancestry that had neither wielded distaff nor plough. Yet she was plump, rubicund, heavy of build, whilst her bourgeois companion looked a mere shadow by comparison, still possessing those slender proportions so envied of women past their prime.

But creaseless forehead and soft purring

speech may hide an iron will no less than ascetic features and rasping voice. The mistress maintained autocratic sway none quite knew how, the subordinate made herself obeyed, but by an effort; that was the difference between them. No one perhaps understood the pair. They were transparent to each other.

"That little Airelle!"

The Mother Superior stopped short as before and eyed her companion.

Sister Savinienne, head teacher of the elder girls, ablest disciplinarian of an able staff, caught up the words ironically. When alone the pair were as unceremonious as fishwives. Before the world, the world of nuns and pupils, the superior was all hauteur and reserve, the subordinate abject in her obsequiousness.

"Twiddle-dum-dee, my dear little soul," she said. "Don't trouble your head about Charlotte's shadow, the farmer's daughter. Airelle will never come to any harm, never do anything extraordinary. She is only an echo of her foster sister. Had you sighed over that little Charlotte, I should have accredited you with a ha'porth of sense."

Mother Aubierge, thus named after a celebrated abbess of the twelfth century, took the familiarity in good part. Lazily opening her eyes, fixing their soft, insinuating glance on her confidante she made reply:—

"Charlotte is as good a riddance as Airelle. But Charlotte possesses something besides wit and beauty—"

"And enthusiasm, high-flown notions, wild fancies."

"Charlotte is the daughter of noble parents and will, of course, marry. The sooner girls marry the better, when they begin to have ideas unlike other people's. But you and I have formed Mademoiselle Charlotte between us; at least, so I flatter myself."

"This convent has existed for the best part of a thousand years," Sister Savinienne said, now speaking soberly and with deliberation. "We have turned out—I say 'we' because what are nuns after all? Mere adjuncts, accessories of bricks and mortar, none having apparently—"

"It is as well to put in that word."

"Apparently more individualism. We have then turned out from first to last thousands

of girls, for the most part high-bred, well-dowered damsels, here made little women of the world, trained to play their little parts becomingly. As far as I know, none ever did, less or more, cast dishonour or shed lustre upon this ancient house."

"Your memory must be a very indifferent one for some matters, that is all I can say. You have forgotten our list, as long as your arm, of Duchesses, Marchionesses, Countesses, to say nothing of those who married ambassadors, governors, judges —"

"My dear, foolish, little creature," Sister Savinienne interrupted, "do you suppose I was thinking of titles, great names plentiful as blackberries? Not I. But celebrated women, notorious women, Maintenons, Montespans, Brinvilliers, — the like of these, name any if you can!"

"Heaven be praised, no. The convent can well spare celebrities and notorieties. Well, what on earth has this to do with Charlotte and Airelle?"

"You said a minute ago that the pair were a good riddance. Just explain that speech, my little innocent darling."

"I have ever left you to yourself in dealing with our young ladies," the other answered in her soft, purring tones. "I know all the while what goes on. You never came with difficulties to me. I could see nevertheless that these two tried you."

"All girls try me," Sister Savinienne said, laying stress upon the adjective. "You have seen the King's tapestry weavers at Arras or Beauvais, haven't you? Each workman has a pattern before him, some exquisite flower, bird, or butterfly, by his side a tangle of coloured threads; hour after hour, day after day, month after month, he sits glued to his seat, now exactly imitating this petal, plume, or wing, now that, till at last his beautiful copy is finished and sent out to the world. Do you suppose such an automaton loves his work? Depend on it, no more than I. We contrive to achieve the task somehow, the raw material is worked up into the desired commodity, the woman of the world. But the labours involved! The deception on both sides! We must seem to love our little angels — or furies — cajole, flatter, fondle, however much they plague us. To return to Charlotte and

Airelle, you are right, I had difficulties with them."

The speaker now drew a note-book from the depths of her capacious pocket and opening it on a well-thumbed page, continued: —

"Not little trumpery, every-day worries. Oh dear, no! These two never plundered the jam-cupboard by means of a false key, never barricaded the dormitory, bolstering the sister in charge till she was black and blue, never half poisoned themselves with emetics when examination day came round, never set fire to an outhouse for the sake of enjoying a commotion. Charlotte and Airelle were above such little peccadilloes."

"That is why I was glad to be rid of them. They think too much. Girls have no business to think."

The other tossed her head derisively.

"Say 'had,' not 'have,' dear little mother. Time makes a leap when the fit is on him. We have both heard the news from Paris."

"Bah, mere moonshine!"

"You will see. You and I have lived fifty years over and above, but within the last few months France has grown centuries older.

You don't believe it? You imagine that things are going on just as they were? Wait and see. Anyhow we may comfort ourselves with the thought that the convent no longer harbours demagogues."

Her superior looked or pretended to look incredulous.

"I was glad to see Mademoiselle Charlotte and her foster sister go, because they were too enquiring, too speculative," she said, evidently unready for the wider topic. Mother Aubierge's intellect, like her digestion, was to be relied upon, but slow.

"They wanted more knowledge than we could, rather would, give them," replied Sister Savinienne. "Aye, and in spite of my keen lookout, got it too! As you know when once my suspicions are aroused about any girl, I search high and low, pockets, mass-books, reticules, desks, here is a copy of what I found in Charlotte's diary."

With excellent elocution she read as follows: "'It is a great evil when the head of a nation is the born enemy of liberty, he who ought to be its defender. This evil I do not hold irremediable.'"

"That is from Rousseau," said the Mother Superior coolly. With all ladies of rank and education, she knew her Jean Jacques, also many another writer under ecclesiastical ban.

"Of course, and when once such heresies circulate in the school-room, we shall have to put up our shutters and beg daily bread like the mendicant friars. The time is perhaps nearer than you think. So much for the young lady's text, now for her sermon, at least a sample. 'Irremediable indeed! Ought the philosopher, much less the Christian, hold any crying evil past remedy? This France of ours, this beloved mother country, is already waking up to such a truth, putting on armour as the crusaders of old, not to defend sacred ashes, a sepulchre, but to guard a mighty bringing forth, infantine, yet Herculean Liberty!'—Humph, pretty well that for a minx of eighteen. But you don't know all yet."

Pocketing her note-book, she went on eagerly. The revelation had as much piquancy as a scandal.

"The two girls could not openly discuss such things, of course. The artfulness of their clandestine correspondence almost passes be-

lief. They would slip little notes into each other's mass-books in chapel, scrawl on tiny scraps of paper, knead them into pellets, then pretend to play at ball! And curl-papers! Charlotte's one day, Airelle's the next. I should like — I really should — to print the reflections I once found on Charlotte's curl-papers. They would not discredit La Rochefoucauld himself."

"After all," Mother Aubierge said, summing up everything in her placid, worldly-wise way, "a good marriage, two or three babies to look after, a household to manage, cure worse things than a fit of Rousseau. And young women of spirit and talent are subject to this sort of malady. Charlotte and Airelle will probably have dowries suitable to their position in life. Thanks to us, they are well educated and accomplished."

"Besides being strikingly handsome."

"Beauty need not count in their case. As I say, we shall hear of weddings and christenings in due course, that is all. We need not waste another thought upon the pair."

"That is your opinion, reverend mother? I differ from you. Time will show which is

the wiser. Well, I will say my prayers, and then take a turn in the garden."

"Have a bonbon, my dear," said the other, holding out a little silver box full of caramel and liquorice.

Her companion stooped down, popped one, two, half-a-dozen sweetmeats in her mouth. The other followed her example; then, turning into a tiny oratory, the two holy women fell on their knees, rigid as statues.

Meantime the last heavy-hooded vehicle in sight had diminished to the proportions of a fly, others disappearing altogether. Strangely solitary was the wide, uniform, Norman landscape, strangely contrasted with the city, — city of churches and conventual buildings, yet full of civic life and animation. From this vantage-ground could be seen as noble a view as any in Normandy. The country lay outspread as a map, immediately opposite rose the town, veritable bouquet of stately ecclesiastical architecture: the graceful spire of St. Pierre, — arrow of stone shooting far into the sky, — the pinnacle of St. Etienne, the flying buttresses of its namesake, the quaint towers of St. Ouen, — all of varied tone, — dazzling

white, silvery-gray, or sombre brown, each pile contrasted in form as in colour. Beyond straggling city with clustered domes and spires, beyond gray-walled stronghold, lofty ramparts and winding river, lay the open country, the so-called prairies ending where the apple orchards and cornfields began. Richly now the afternoon sun gilded the scene; not warmer, deeper in hue the sky of Athens itself than this luminous July atmosphere, setting off the exquisite tints of marble and building-stone, intensifying golden ear and ripening apple. Forming a brilliant patch within the cloistered domain lay garden and orchard, crimsoning nectarine on sunlit walls, golden melon amid bluish-green leaves bearing testimony no less to soil and climate than to excellent husbandry. Westward the convent joined the magnificent mausoleum of Queen Matilda. With arrogance pardonable in its foundress, she had reserved a large portion of the church for her holy women and their pupils. Every Sunday and saint's day, the long procession of black-robed school-girls was marshalled by veiled nuns, also wearing black, along the vast, empty, white-walled corridors into their own

especial chapel, there quite shut off from the rest of the congregation, themselves hardly visible to the crowd.

From end to end of this time-honoured Convent of the Visitation reigned order and plenty. Famine was abroad throughout France. The awful spectre knocked not at such gates as these.

CHAPTER II.

THE SCHOOL-GIRL'S HOME-COMING.

MEANTIME, at centipede's pace plodded the crazy old vehicle bearing Airelle from the cloister to the world. Many a noble demoiselle fetched in calèche with armorial bearings by governess and lackey, was home before their school-fellow's journey had fairly begun. The diligence, as it made slow way, seemed, perhaps, the least alive thing in these busy streets. Emerging from an old hostelry behind St. Pierre, it crept into the stately quadrangle set round with richly decorated burgher houses, not two of these alike. Some showed fanciful pinnacles and projecting dormers with sculptured armorial bearings; others, carved balconies, lofty chimneys, and casements barred crosswise. No uniformity was here; sumptuousness had squalor next door; wooden walls and dilapidated roofs were side by side with palatial masonry. As yet, street numbers had

not come into fashion. Each house, nevertheless, possessed its distinctive sign; the noble displayed his quarterings, the merchant his ware, the craftsman his tool.

The long, narrow streets winding towards the country showed even more picturesqueness and bustle. Here were timbered gables; there lofty slated roofs, running to a sharp point; below, low archway disclosing quaint interior. Above the open stalls of mercer or fish-vender hung huge glove or mackerel, shop signs being necessary when few folks could read. Before wide doorways, all who could plied their trade abroad for the sake of sunshine and society. The gray and yellow walls and roofs of tile or slate stood out sharply against the burning, blue sky; whilst beyond, where the town ended and the country began, rich foliage above high garden walls added a new touch of colour.

Hitherto guarded sedulously as the rest, no sooner was Airelle outside convent gates, than the responsibility of former guardians ended. The farmer's daughter could enjoy the privilege of humble birth, and traverse half Normandy alone.

Nothing seemed farther from Airelle's thoughts than dismay at such a prospect. Free, alike, from timidity and self-consciousness, greeting her travelling companions with friendliness, doing her best to be accommodating in the hot, crowded interior, she appeared absent-minded, as perhaps was only natural, wrapped in contemplation, but absolutely at her ease.

A tall, beautiful, by nature beautifully finished girl, the fine bloom of health on her cheeks, graceful yet muscular figure, and direct, alert glance, betokening enviable, if rustic, ancestry, Airelle was half peasant, half bourgeois. By virtue of circumstances and education, she stood midway between the two conditions. With the utmost simplicity, she now studied at intervals a pocket volume of Corneille; as unaffectedly, she took from an ancient country woman her half-knitted stocking of coarsest yarn, deftly plying the pins.

"Let me finish off the heel for you, dear little mother," she said; then between reading and knitting, glanced behind. As the city gradually receded from view, one by one vanishing familiar features, the girl crimsoned,

bent low and brushed away a tear. Was she weeping for the cloistered calm now lost forever? Was she regretting the boon companion of studious days, the unique, the adorable, henceforth her dream-Charlotte?

Fair, indeed, showed this last beloved perspective. Craning her neck, Airelle caught sight of the wondrously beautiful spire of St. Pierre, of St. Jean with its twin towers, one, like so many human lives, a torso; seen last of all, the superb mausoleum of Duke William, its vast congeries rising high above the city. At first the landscape consisted of level fallow and pasture, a region desert-like in its treelessness and monotony, yet not without beauty under play of golden light and deep purple shadow. Few and far between rose one-storied, mud-walled, thatched cabins here isolated, there grouped together as in Brittany. Elsewhere was seen a village, towering high above it one of those curious churches with lofty tower and double penthouse, recalling a lighthouse in mid-ocean. Disproportionate except from a symbolic point of view are these quaint towers, higher far were their dimensions if intended to measure

the supremacy of the Church! At rare intervals an isolated, walled-in farmhouse broke the level lines; and patient stooping figures might be seen, men and women getting in their corn or buckwheat. The day was one of sultry, windless, cloudless calm. Blindingly glistened the white, chalky landscape, as yet unrelieved by wood, stream, or pasture. And unspeakably quiet and deserted seemed the land; sandy entourage of Oriental city could hardly be more so.

The wheels, harness, bells, and cracking whips of the stage-coach disturbed the stillness, no other sound.

"Ah! once my poor stiff finger joints were as nimble as yours, darling," said the old peasant. "How beautifully you heel! But the Sisters of the Visitation know and teach everything, folks say."

"Nay, not everything, mother," was the playfully ironic answer.

Opposite the pair, under his knees piled canvas bags of grain, sat a burly farmer. He now eyed the knitter with paternal interest.

"It costs a pretty penny to be educated at the Visitation, I'll warrant?" he asked,

thinking of his own little daughter. Things were fast changing in France. The noblesse was no longer to form a Chinese wall; henceforth other titles were to count, so at least report said. Already honestly gained fortune was a power.

Airelle answered frankly, —

"Thirty louis d'or a year, I believe. But I was paid for by rich bourgeois, relations of my mother's nurse-child, my foster sister."

"Did you learn the harpsichord?" put in the other, his mouth evidently watering at the thought. Airelle's subdued manners, clear enunciation, and love of a book impressed him deeply.

"For what purpose, neighbour, since I should never possess one?" was the half-regretful answer. "But the guitar I did learn, my dear foster sister presented me with an instrument, and singing all of us learned of course, flower-painting too, and many kinds of fancy work."

"And composition?" rejoined the farmer, "the art of putting thoughts on paper, of saying in a letter exactly what you want to say, neither a syllable more nor less. Did the ladies of the Visitation teach you that?"

Airelle laughed.

"I was on the point of saying that we learned little else, in the way of book-learning, I mean. But it would not be true. We had to get pages of poetry by heart," she said.

Her fellow-traveller again looked wistful. He imagined his little Jeanne being able to recite for hours at a time, as alluring a prospect as that of hearing her play on the harpsichord. He pondered and pondered. The heat was still stifling although the berline had not started till the afternoon. Red hot rays now beat against the western window, flimsy baize affording little protection. But travellers such as these were well inured to their torrid summers. Farmer and peasant, merchant and notary, curé and lay sister, wiped steaming brows with huge cotton pocket handkerchiefs, drank copious draughts of cider, munched rye bread, then one by one, good humouredly dropped asleep.

Soon all but Airelle yielded to drowsiness.

The scene had now brightened, sweeps of velvety sward, foliage of poplar and acacia imparted a sense of coolness, the deep-green alder was reflected in crystal brook, hedges

and a tangle of wild clematis and honeysuckle bordered wayside paths, the land rose and fell, not as yet breaking into hill and dale, but refreshingly varying the sameness.

These scenes although dear and familiar had no fascination for the dreaming girl. With hands folded listlessly on her lap, knitting and book being given over for a while, she remembered and remembered, the luxury of looking back purchased by falling tears. Her fellow-passengers woke to change posture and take another draught, that was all. She felt alone.

Horses had been changed at wayside post-houses, more than once, before the long unclouded day closed and only stars lit the way.

Soon added speed, extra cracking of whips, and prolonged blasts of the driver's horn announced a longer halt. It was past midnight when they drove by the ivy-covered towers and choked-up moat of Bayeux; passing underneath the eastern city gate flanked with turrets and by St. Martin's porch, from which piously hung a lantern, the coach dashed over the ancient stone bridge; by gabled houses in stone and wood, through narrow streets feebly lighted by lanterns slung across a rope, the

posthouse was reached, one of many with tapering roofs and tiers of dormer windows, forming a little square. Dimly visible above these closely packed roofs and turrets were the spires of the Cathedral, its one Romanesque tower with terraced cupola soaring over the rest.

The rattle over cobble-stones aroused the sleepiest, Airelle's fellow-passengers now rubbed their limbs, some got their belongings together.

"Do you stop here, love?" asked the grandame of Airelle.

The girl shook her head although without apparent regret. She was too much occupied with her own thoughts to feel bodily weariness. By inheritance, moreover, came that strong, absolutely sound health, that power of physical resistance, rare as perfect beauty itself.

"My home is at Le Rosel, in the Bessin. I shall not arrive till dawn," she said, as she helped her companion with her bundles.

"Anyhow, alight and take a basin of soup, my girl," the farmer put in. "You won't start under an hour, at least. I'll keep you company," he added kindly.

"Thank you, neighbour. Ah, Pierre, it is you? But I have come to look after our little Airelle," shouted a benevolent, officious, unmistakably clerical voice at the door. Airelle, springing to the ground, was caught in the speaker's arms, kissed on either cheek, again and again, finally held at arm's length under the lantern overhead.

"Father Patrix!" she said, evidently gratified, but without sharing his demonstrativeness. "How kind of you to look out for me!"

"I did more, my child. I came on purpose to take you home. And you know," he added slily, "I love running about the world, and hearing the news. But you go inside, and sup, whilst I try to get a peep at a newspaper."

Thereupon, he pointed to the salle à manger of the roomy, straggling old inn, commended her to the care of a stout, elderly landlady, and betook himself to the café adjoining. The diligence that had brought Airelle hither at the same time brought letters and journals from Paris, the latter few and far between, and two days old. Father Patrix, having first

assured himself that his charge was being attended to, waited, in a fever of expectation. He was a brisk, bright-eyed man of sixty, with little of the priest about him but conventional accessories, tonsured crown, acquired officiousness, dress, and manners. Had destiny put him in his proper place, he would have made an admirable ambassador to half-civilized coasts. Up to a certain point and within certain limits, he could read men; and dexterously make their actions, of his own suggestion, appear wholly spontaneous and self-interested. Beyond such boundaries, he was wholly at a loss. Airelle's parents he could lead as children; over herself, he exercised no influence whatever.

About the posthouse were stables, workshops, and warehouses, all now silent and deserted; only the arrival of the diligence created a little stir in the place.

Stable-boys with lanterns ran hither and thither, the watchman in his heavy cloak came to look on, a little café opposite showed cheerful light.

Here were noisy card players and topers, their faces hardly discernible for tobacco-

smoke, their voices raised to a deafening pitch.

Father Patrix posted himself at the entrance, determined to waylay the flying sheet from Paris. One newspaper only, small and scantily supplied with news, found its way to this cathedral city of six or seven thousand souls. With the readers it was a case of first come, first served. The curé glanced at the card players within, chuckling to himself. No one seemed particularly anxious for tidings. The world, that is to say the world of France, had just turned upside down. A few days since the Bastille had fallen, with it a political and judicial system hundreds of years old. Good hands at whist and écarté seemed of more importance to all present. The momentary survey well-nigh cost Father Patrix his game. He had not noticed at the angle of the house a figure also on the alert. Nor apparently was his own errand divined by the furtive watcher. When at last a stable-boy emerged from the doorway opposite, the journal in hand, both advanced eagerly, as they met almost tumbling into each other's arms. The messenger laughed aloud, and

indeed under ordinary circumstances the incident would have been droll enough. But despite the semi-darkness, Father Patrix recognized in his rival the self-styled minister of a heretical church, some Protestant even emboldened by recent events to wear his badge of office. Death warrant but ten years before, the ecclesiastical cravat was to-day hardly visible. Eyes less keen would have passed it by.

"The devil take you!" cried the ruffled priest, shaking himself as if from a swarm of wasps. "Can't you see where you are going? Am I to be kept waiting for the like of you?"

"Excuse me; I was here first," replied the other, his hand still outstretched. "Yonder serving folk can back my statement."

"Fellow, I have only five minutes—"

"Nor have I," was the quiet but decided answer.

Justice was so clearly on the last speaker's side that even the errand boy hesitated. True enough, Father Patrix watched at the café door, but he had been long forestalled by the other. A second, and all indecision

seemed over. Of course a priest must take precedence of a Huguenot! Triumphantly the curé stretched his arm towards the prize, when, catching the pastor's dark look, the lad drew back his own. Brimful of mischief, agog for the sight of broken pates and bleeding noses, above all for a passage of arms between two reverend gentlemen, democratic, moreover, since a week ago, he waved his journal aloft, crying:—

"Catch who can! Now for it, my jolly turkey-cocks!"

Even bitter passions have their ludicrous side. The young scapegrace's face, voice, and gesture, street-urchinhood incarnate, contrasted as they were with the ugly looks of priest and pastor, must have raised a smile from the gravest. As will often happen in daily life, both men were irrationally exasperated by a trifle. Father Patrix did, indeed, recall the bird just alluded to: on tip-toe, cheeks red as the garters now freely displayed, muttering and gesticulating, he caught at the paper. The pastor's countenance was a veritable thunder-cloud. For a moment it appeared likely that the stable

imp would have his way, and the tall, spare, yet stalwart figure, now so rigid, was about to fling the plump, ungainly priest to the ground. But immediately regaining self-mastery, with a shrug of the shoulders the injured man turned away. He also had taken his place in another vehicle, and the missing of it meant a seven miles' tramp. What was such sacrifice to be compared to the sight of a Paris journal? The pair had not dreamed of a watcher. On the threshold opposite, and with a glow of shame, Airelle witnessed the little scene. She at once stepped forward, holding out a folded sheet of printed paper.

"Here, reverend sir, is what you want," she said in that calm, deliberate voice of hers, voice of eighteen, but of eighteen that felt, weighed, reflected!

"By the merest chance," she added, smiling at his astonishment, "two papers were folded as one in Paris. I procured the duplicate for my father."

"Nay, then, he must not be deprived of it on my account," the stranger stammered.

"Indeed, we shall be none the poorer. Our

curé yonder, my travelling companion, will relate everything when we reach home."

He faltered out incoherent thanks, trying to retain her by a look or word.

Only to gaze on the beautiful picture for another moment, his face said! The hard, stern look had vanished. No smile came as yet, only a quite new expression, an expression that secularized, softened him. This girl's initiative seemed a herald of brighter days, a welcome to his long-lost, newly recovered France.

Airelle, too, lingered, realizing the full significance of a deed in itself mere courtesy and forethought. She rejoiced thus to bear witness to her convictions, run counter to prejudices of yesterday. The stranger had set her thinking. In studying his appearance she read his story.

Hardly as yet in his prime, his looks, nevertheless, showed steely lines and his forehead deep corrugations.

It was a face that interested her, made her start, too, with the conviction of an unexpected reminder. Where had she seen him before? if not his very self, then parent, brother, sister? Even expression seemed familiar, the

look of habitual impersonality, disinterestedness, of one who lived rather in the life of others than his own, by virtue of circumstance being cut off from the common lot.

"Keep the Gazette, sir," she said turning to go. "May it contain good news for you, for me, for France!"

"Amen! and the blessing of Heaven be with you," was all he could get out.

"Your blessing, too, may I bear it away with me?" she asked, wanting to atone for the priest's insult, to show that, at least in her own eyes, the dogma, the caste, were nothing, real religion, brotherhood, Christian charity, all in all.

His lips trembled, his eyes showed the dew of tears, the words she asked for came so tremulously as to be hardly audible. Then she re-entered the inn.

Meantime Father Patrix scanned his newspaper, flushing, ejaculating over every sentence. The tidings might be good or evil from his point of view, an onlooker could not divine, momentous it certainly was; once, twice, came a summons from the postboys, and still he read on, his eyes glued to the

page. When at last with a cracking of whips, blast of the horn, and loud rumble of wheels the diligence dashed out of the inn yard, he awoke to actualities.

All was confusion in Paris, the revolution was spreading throughout the kingdom — but he had paid six livres for his place, he had Airelle in his charge, and, moreover, bargained for hot galettes, curds and whey at the farm.

In frantic haste he flung down the sheet, gathered up his skirts and shouting lustily, stopped the coach.

With kindling eyes, bated breath, and glowing cheeks, the pastor now scanned his journal. Then, placing it carefully in his breast-pocket, he also took his seat, not in a public conveyance, but a carter's wagon bound to a village across country. Was his mood of exultation or dismay as he journeyed through that quiet starlit landscape?

He hardly knew; there was room both for rapture and misgiving. The political and social fabric now falling to pieces was rotten to the core. How a good and stable order of things was to be evolved out of imminent

chaos, he could not as yet discern. To forebode a worse, was despair of human nature and human progress, — to disavow the cardinal doctrines he professed.

Then he thought of what had just happened, Airelle's image banishing vindictive memories.

CHAPTER III.

A FAMILY GROUP.

EXQUISITE was that summer dawn in the quiet Norman landscape. At last Airelle slept; in spite of his excitement Father Patrix also nodded; meantime the stars grew fainter and fainter, and, through bluish-gray mist, the familiar world again became apparent. With the stars and dusky heaven vanished silence also. As one by one new shapes and new shades of colour grew distinct, so sound after sound broke the stillness, each deepening as the hour wore on. First came low yet joyous pipings by the wayside,—soft, just audible notes, no more to be identified than dimly outlined, dusky-hued bush or tree. Gradually as opening fan, spread the eastern glow, at first no warmer in tone than the ripened barley, quickly turning to ruddy flame; and, at the signal, cocks crowed shrilly from farmyard near; dogs barked as the shepherd

unpenned his fold; eager for the herbage, cattle lowed; a hundred signs of life animated the scene. The gradually receding view of Bayeux, had been lost to the travellers, but dawn brought a smiling scene by way of compensation. Meads set round with poplar and willow, apple orchards with fruit of ruby red and yellowish-green, patches of buckwheat in full blow, — sea surf pink with rosy sunset glow, — croft, copse, and dingle. Such was the scene as they approached Airelle's home: a little, laughing, swift-flowing stream played hide-and-seek amid the verdure. Some joyous elf it seemed, to lighten heavy hearts, and speak of hope and fairyland.

It was barely four of the clock when Father Patrix and his charge reached their destination, but already the long, long day of outdoor toil had begun. Milkmaids mounted on donkeys, their copper vessels gleaming like fire, ambled to the milking-place. Washerwomen, sunburnt and tattered as gypsies, were setting forth with bats and bundles for the river. Church and convent bells from afar tinkled the hour of lauds.

Here was no town or village, only a wayside

hostelry, just now presenting a study for some Teniers. Early as it was in the day, the good folks with the feathered and four-footed members of their household were up and stirring. The wayside board presented a coarse, jolly, but not repellent picture. Meals were ever eaten out of doors from May till October; and although the sun was hardly up, soup was served just outside the house door. Here master and mistress, men and maids, shared their meal with pigs, dogs, cocks, and hens, the last familiarly scavenging the table as they would the granary floor. The village was a mile off, but a little group awaited the post-horses and news. A recruiting captain of militia, his deep lapelled coat ornamented with silver lace, his cocked hat showing a filigree fleur-de-lis; a stout, rubicund Franciscan in brown serge and with rope for girdle; the parish beadle, town-crier, sacristan, and bell-ringer in one, he also a portly person as befitted holder of duties so important and multifarious; the syndic or functionary whose business it was to settle matters between parishioners, curé, and seigneur; the village barber and blood-letter, — all these were up and stirring.

"What would you have?" said one to the other. "A revolution does not happen every day."

"We must hardly expect father and mother here, they are too busy in the dairy and afield," said the priest cheerily, as the vehicle drew up. "Eudette, too, good wench, I'll be bound, is hard at work, preparing the galettes."

"Humph! that is all you know about it," shouted a shrill uncanny voice from below, followed by peals of loud, foolish laughter. Then above an uncouth figure squatted on a handbarrow rose two others, large, homely, dignified; and Airelle's composure was shaken for a moment.

Years had passed since they parted. The old clinging affection remained.

"So Isaye, so Gillette, you couldn't wait even half an hour. Already I am envied for having forestalled you by so many. Well, here she is, your Airelle, not another lass like her in the Bessin."

The peasant and his wife had as yet no word to say. Their quiet, tearful kisses were interrupted by Eudette.

"Am I to have none?" cried the warm-hearted, dull-brained, unprepossessing creature on the barrow. Eudette had come straight from the neathouse. She sowed, ploughed, carted dung. As a matter of course her clothes smelt of these labours; her person was coarse, ill-favoured. But she belonged to the family, a waif, having no other. She would have traversed all France afoot to serve her kind protectors. Airelle could not draw back from her embrace.

"Come, come, that will do, wench," Isaye said. "Leave the girl alone, and see about her chest. We must make haste. You are both feeling a trifle hungry, I dare say," he added, turning to the travellers.

They were a striking pair, Isaye Aubery and his wife Gillette. Types of the Norman peasantry at its best, magnificent of limb, with large, regular features and dark colouring, these two without being intellectual were evidently thoughtful beyond the average. Characteristic inborn benevolence saved them from the predominance of physical nature, the coarseness that spoiled so many of their neighbours. The eighteen-year-old girl, their con,

vent-bred daughter, seemed a portrait of both, in some respects differing from either. Here was the same largeness, the same amplitude, yet toned down by spells more potent than youth or benignity. Isaye and Gillette had given their heir an admirable physique, glorious beauty and fine qualities of heart and mind. Another had imparted soul, outside influence and agencies subdued flesh to spirit. Child of these simple folks, she belonged to herself and her ideals.

Eudette, laughing, chuckling, muttering, after the manner of the witling, did as she was told. The chest of clothes was placed on the barrow, and all set out.

Just beyond the posthouse, they turned into a rustic lane or cartway, during the winter showing two or three feet deep of mud, to-day as encumbered with dust. Whilst French high roads were the best of Europe, being kept in order by enforced labour of the poor, crossways remained mere furrow upon furrow, to be literally ploughed through, no matter the season.

Now Eudette's heavily laden handcart swayed one way, now another, here it tilted

on one side, there it tumbled clean over. Taking these mishaps as matter of course, frantically laughing at every accident, the girl followed her employers, they, in turn, paying no heed. Isaye went first, his tall, muscular, well-proportioned figure standing out against the pure light of early morning. Airelle, gathering up her skirt, tripped after him, Gillette and the priest came last, all in single file on a solidified ridge of sand.

On either side of the cart track rose tall hedges of hazel and hawthorn, thrushes sang merrily, wild clematis made trails of dewy bloom.

"And the news, Isaye, don't you want to hear what is going on in Paris?" shouted Father Patrix at the top of his voice.

"Little I fancy that will bring a sou into my pocket," replied the other in equally high key, and in a tone of philosophic resignation. Isaye had long ago decided that the times were evil past mending. There was nothing to do but toil and toil, and make the best of things.

"Don't be so sure," Father Patrix retorted knowingly. "My notion is — but here are

our neighbours, Father Avril and his sons. Good day, all of you. Off to the harvest-field, eh?"

Breaking through the thicket emerged four figures, the elder somewhat bent and angular, the three younger erect, athletic, well-proportioned as sculptured barons of old, those companions of William the Norman whose appearance struck terror into the hearts of their Saxon foes.

Each bore a scythe on his shoulder, and on each bare brown chest already stood beads of sweat. With extraordinary brilliance, the group showed against the background, intensely blue sky and tangled foliage of brightest emerald; their complexions brown as torrid suns could make them, eyes and hair of deep, shining black. Like as were all four, character lent startling difference.

The patriarch's expression was gentle almost to benignity, as toward of disposition was evidently Elie his youngest-born. Raymond the eldest and comeliest, had a masterful, turbulent look, whilst Lambert, the second, lacked individuality. As so often happens in families, he shared the temperaments of the rest,

good qualities and foibles combining to make up a nonentity, crude mixture of impulse and vacillation.

Taken aback at the apparition of Airelle, father and sons forgot to reply. All eyes were fixed on the beautiful girl in semi-bourgeois dress, one pair with a look that she resented.

"You have not forgotten neighbour Avril, child," said Isaye, "nor the lads; lads, at least, when you saw them last?"

The four, scythe on shoulder, gazed in speechless astonishment, the old man brushing away a tear of pure pleasure, Raymond putting Airelle out of countenance by his deliberate stare, the younger men smiling and nodding at their former playfellow.

"Saints in Heaven!" cried Avril, "it seems but yesterday, neighbour, since your girl could just reach my breeches pocket when I bought her a Jew's harp from the fair. Kiss me, darling, and adieu, we must be off to cut our barley."

Airelle, after daughterly fashion, embraced the speaker. He glanced from her to his sons with a sly look.

"Well?" he said.

Eudette, screaming and laughing, pushed Elie forward. Raymond, fain to be first in everything, strode past the pair, fuming and storming. The pair of scythes clattered. Lambert advanced also. But Airelle, kissing her hand to each, waved off the three, averting a scuffle.

"Adieu, adieu, neighbours," she cried, adding to the priest: "Come, father, let us hasten. Have you forgotten our long fast?"

The mowers turned to go, Father Patrix shouting after them, both hands to his mouth:—

"And the news from Paris? Can't you stop to hear it? Ministers sent flying; the court frightened out of its wits; the Revolution spreading like wildfire—"

The four listened, smiling ironically, and continued their march. "What mattered the news to them?" their faces said. With Isaye, they despaired of any social upheaval or political change, as far as they were concerned. Out of every hundred francs sweated for from dawn to sunset, from January to December, exactly sixty-seven went into royal,

seigneurial, and municipal coffers, the poor remnant only into his own. Tyranny and injustice seemed irremediable, no more to be done away with than drought, inundations, storm, or mildew.

The farmhouse, although mud-walled and thatched, had no dilapidated or poverty-stricken air. No peasants throughout France were better housed than those of the Bessin. Their dwellings were two-storied to begin with, a great improvement upon the hovels of neighbouring provinces; and many, being built by their owners, showed no little ingenuity and architectural skill. Symmetrical blocks of rich brown earth, well kneaded with straw, made walls alike durable and weather-proof. Only a coat of whitewash and a garden plot were needed for pleasingness. Houses, barns, and offices made a mass of dull, monotonous mud colour.

Whilst far better built and more commodious than cabin of day labourer, Airelle's house could not yet bear comparison to the walled-in granges of upper Normandy. What it needed was light. The window tax, cruelest of all, compelled folks to live in such semi-darkness. So few and microscopic the

apertures serving as windows in cottage homes, that but for his out-of-door life the peasant of the Ancien Régime must have become purblind. Here, at least, the openings were stopped neither with horn nor canvas, but glass, luxury of the better-off in these parts.

The house was approached from behind, on this side lying apple orchards and cider presses and farm buildings, on the other, forming a vast yellowish-green expanse, sweep upon sweep of pasture, the renowned herbage of the Bessin.

Dreamily Airelle followed her parents within. Here, too, everything was familiar, yet after long absence how strange! Instead of vast, speechless, well-lighted refectories and dormitories, — the religious orders being exempt from window tax, — here she saw a sombre, smoke-dried, unpaved, floorless kitchen; leading out of this was a second room, equally bare, and beyond, a mere cupboard, unlighted save from without, her own little sleeping place. Against the wall of the bedchamber was the solid oak bedstead of master and mistress, hooks from which hung Sunday clothes, clothes-press, and a chair

or two made up the furniture. The upper store was used as storage; on a trundle-bed, amid piles of farmhouse lumber, sleeping Eudette, the ploughwoman. From end to end of the kitchen stretched a long deal table; alongside were placed stools and benches; buffet, flour-bin, spinning-wheel, were there; not the least little thing for grace or ornament. On the opposite side of the huge fireplace was a cavity resembling the sepulchral niche of cathedrals. Here slept old Judith Eudeline, the Huguenot dairywoman. Her best skirt of blue Rouen serge, Sunday bed-gown or jacket, and hooded cloak hung at the foot of the bed, all her worldly goods being in a box underneath. No farmhouse was without such an installation, a domestic sleeping in the kitchen being regarded no less indispensable than the watch-dog outside. Flitches of bacon hung from the smoke-dried beams, wheel-shaped loaves of barley bread weeks old garnished the dresser, from rusty tripod over smouldering wood fire a cooking pot emitted savoury steam. The priest rubbed his hands and chuckled joyfully: —

"Ah, Gillette, one knows what to expect

when paying you a visit. Little Airelle," he added, "you have learned many fine things from the ladies of the Visitation. I'll lay a wager, your mother can teach you more."

"Perhaps more to the purpose, father," said the housewife, glancing at her newly recovered daughter. The sob of joy, the first maternal ecstasy over, she felt a little nervous, a trifle ill at ease with this tall, beautiful, self-composed girl. It had been an extraordinary piece of good luck, no doubt, that nursing of the bourgeois babe, her foster child, Mademoiselle Charlotte, that five years' schooling paid for her own daughter at the Visitation. But what if Airelle had come home with her head full of grand notions, her mind above daily duties and the natural, inevitable future, — wifehood, motherhood? As if divining the thought, Airelle hung up her headdress, the prim half-bonnet, half-cap, of white muslin, tied under the chin with bright ribbon now in fashion, unhooked a coarse apron from the wall, fastened it over her dress.

"Shall I help you, mother?" she asked.

It was characteristic of the pair that whilst Gillette could not as yet reassure herself as

to the morrow, the girl showed no misgiving. Her quiet, composed, half pensive air seemed to indicate resignation. She had evidently prepared her mind to many disillusions.

Gillette, ever of few words, pointed to the dresser; Father Patrix, reddening the while, plied the bellows; his hostess, having dished the lump of meat flavoured after local fashion with saffron and cummin, carefully browned the thin buckwheat cakes; Airelle set the table.

Her task was of the simplest. The huge oaken press contained stores of homespun linen, but the luxury of a tablecloth could not be thought of except upon great occasions, — weddings, funeral feasts, and the like. Country folks, however, no longer ladled their vegetable soup out of a common bowl, as the great king and his courtiers had done at Versailles barely a hundred years before. Each had metal spoon and coarse earthenware basin; each hacked off morsels of bread with his own clasp-knife. Glasses stood on the buffet shelf, but cider and cervoise, or barley drink of Celtic origin and name, were drunk out of pewter goblets. Salt was the only condiment here, not, alas! emblem of

good-fellowship, as among Bedouin tribes, but of the most hateful tyranny ever devised of despots. Before sitting down to table, one and all washed their hands in a stone hollow just outside the house door.

With twinkling eyes, Father Patrix watched the deliberate preparations of his hostesses, everything done slowly and well.

"Ah, ah, look at your woman folk, Isaye!" he cried. "Truly may they say in the Bessin, 'Quiet 'haviour, cool head, snail's pace.' And again, 'The master wants arms; the mistress, brains.' I always think of that wise saw, when I see Isaye on a hay-rick, and Gillette over her frying-pan."

With added exhilaration, he saw Isaye place a bottle of home-made hydromel on the table.

"Look at him, Mother Gillette," he said again, rubbing his hands. "The sly fellow makes his daughter's home-coming an excuse for a little boozing."

Isaye sat down smiling gravely. The times were hard and troubled. Rarely was any laughter heard in this Norman home but Eudette's motiveless giggling and the priest's half-suppressed chuckle.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER-BREAKFAST TALK.

"And now, which shall we have first, Airelle's news or mine?" asked the curé. Knives and forks had rattled without intermission for the space of half an hour, dish after dish of galettes had vanished, the stewed meal also. Eudette was off to her harvest work, hosts and guests, Airelle seemed one to-day, were left to confidential chat and home-made hydromel. The farmer and his wife just sipped and sipped. Airelle hardly did that, the priest made up for all.

"Airelle is not going to run away," Isaye put in suggestively. He entertained a veritable affection for his spiritual director — so called — he delighted in his company. But it was just upon six o'clock; already too much time had been spent upon sociabilities.

"Come, Isaye, don't hurry me off after that fashion. You are not likely to hear such news as mine every day."

"Will it put a sou in my pocket?" asked Isaye, repeating his former question. "Or prevent a single centime from being dragged out?"

He had risen but now reseated himself.

"Listen, father; you know as well as I do, how things stand. Take a hundred francs toiled and moiled for, out of that hundred, twenty-five go for the King's tax, sixteen for the seigneur's dues, eleven for the church tithes, fifteen for poll tax, just thirty-three remain to me."

He shook his head.

"Things may not be so bad in other parts of France, they are past mending here. Remember the famine in Normandy a few years back, the riots at Caen and at Bayeux! I have seen, and you must have seen too, honest fathers and mothers like ourselves," here he pointed to Gillette, "obliged to drive away famished wretches at the point of the gun, because all that they had to give was gone. You know what hunger will do with a dog: beat him, kick him, fling scalding water over him, he will steal where he can, and starving human beings are turned to wolves. I have seen — bah! — but it turns my stomach to think of

such things. And if mothers no longer sell their children for a mouthful of bread, there are thousands who never know what it is to get a bellyful. The saints and the Holy Virgin save France! — man cannot."

Gillette, as she removed goblets and bowls, looked and listened. Twice Airelle opened her lips, then checked herself. He added:

"Better by far had our Normandy remained as it was with its own Dukes, Parliament, and independence, I say — "

"Tut, tut, that is high treason," put in the priest.

The farmer went on without heeding the interruption.

"I know nothing of past times, of what you call history, but what folks tell me. How should I? My grandfather lived to be ninety, and could remember the Revocation; I mean the driving out of the Protestants. I have heard him say that many a town and village hereabouts was well-to-do till then. Look at little places like Caudebec and Neufchâtel, where hats used to be made and sold to foreign parts. Nowadays, instead of honest, thriving families at work from morning to night,

Huguenots, they were to a man, you find beggars swarming with vermin."

Father Patrix made a grimace.

"And better company, too. Come, come, Isaye, don't try to make me believe that you approve of heretics. That is worse than high treason," he said.

Isaye still took no notice.

"Havre again, the great port at the mouth of the Seine! Merchants say that the town is nothing like what it was in former days, before the edict against the Huguenots. But, as I mentioned just now, I am no scholar. I only know what others and what my own eyes tell me. We may draw up our Cahiers, send up petitions by the dozen; the States-General won't be able to do more for us than did the Notables two years ago. The peasant folk will have to pay King's taxes, whilst clergy and noblesse get off scot-free as before. The poor man will have to lodge, feed, and clothe the King's soldiers, whilst the rich man's house is his own. The poor man's son will be forced into the militia, and hunted down like a wild beast if he tries to escape, whilst the young scapegrace of a marquis or count amuses himself at court."

"Humph! And the Revolution?"

Isaye put on his hat; he had no more time to spare, his face said.

"The Revolution won't lengthen my working-day, I fancy," he replied, with bitter emphasis.

The speech suggested the condition of the French peasant. Economy implies means, something to be eked out, made most of; with him, this something meant time only and bodily strength.

"Adieu, father," he added.

"You will listen to-morrow," shouted the curé after him. "I tell you the whole country is in revolt."

Isaye shook his head as he stepped out of doors.

"Shall I be a doit the richer?" he replied, in equally high key.

Father Patrix now rose, and, standing on the threshold, again shouted.

"The troops in Paris have fraternized with the people."

"So much the better, if thereby broken heads are avoided," was the retort.

"The Third Estate has got everything in its

own hands," bawled out the priest, Isaye now being a hundred yards off. "The King's brothers are fleeing the kingdom. The King—"

But Isaye, looking back, shook his head ironically. The sun was now high. Revolution might be chimerical; the day's labour remained hard fact.

Father Patrix now felt obliged to take leave.

"Ah! that husband of yours, Gillette, he will hearken, I warrant, before the week is out. These doings in Paris are no jesting matter, I assure you."

"They cannot be worse than the famine ten years ago," Gillette replied. "But the Holy Virgin and the saints help us! Whatever happens, the like of us are sure to suffer."

"You should hear what our Charlotte says," Airelle broke in, almost passionately; then, encountering the priest's inquisitive look, she stopped short, and coloured.

"So Mademoiselle Charlotte has indoctrinated you with new ideas, has she? Ah, ah! Mother Gillette, I must look after this little lamb of my fold. Well, good bye, my children! Adieu till Sunday."

The priest, with a merry face and elastic step, strode homeward across the hot, unshaded herbage. Revolution might mean a good many things; he had, perhaps, no misgiving as far as his own future was concerned. And Gillette's excellent breakfast was a gastronomic event; he had never tasted better galettes.

Mother and daughter set to work, chatting gravely as they cleansed and scoured. Already Airelle missed the perpetual, childish titter of the convent. In the farmhouse, the only habitual merrymaker was Eudette, Eudette the orphaned, the uncomely, the brainless.

"What were you beginning to say about our Charlotte?" asked Gillette.

Airelle became her real self in a moment. Never completer transformation wrought by a name.

The pair were alone, not a soul within hearing, their washing up and rinsing did not hinder talk.

"Mother," cried the girl passionately, her eyes filling with tears, "it was not the ladies of the Visitation who educated me, but our Charlotte."

Gillette looked up quietly, shyly, with an expression of positive alarm. These events in Paris of which the curé had spoken, the rumoured risings throughout the country, could they have been anticipated within convent walls? Was this Revolution, so called, an epidemic, not, like fever and famine, affecting the body only, but mastering the mind?

"The sisters thought themselves my teachers, mine and hers," Airelle went on, in the same eager tones; "and they did teach us many things, — to sew, to write, to declaim. Of others, those the most important, they were as ignorant as the youngest under their care —"

"My daughter!" Gillette cried aghast. By no means a bigot, still less of a devotee, although an orthodox Catholic, the good woman regarded such aspersions as almost criminal.

"But Charlotte understood them, the subjects I speak of," Airelle continued. "We used to get news in the convent, of course; we heard of what was going on outside, — the insurrection, the razing of the Bastille, the clamour for juster laws. And Charlotte grew wild with joy. She said that France was

freeing herself from her fetters, that the reign of tyranny was over, and fanaticism doomed. Ask your own heart, mother, can it be right that one Frenchman helps to fill the King's treasury, fight the King's wars, be liable to torture and death without trial, whilst another, the noble, the privileged, possesses his purse, his freedom, the inviolability of his person? Can it be right that old Judith's kith and kin were imprisoned, ruined, exiled, simply for refusing to hear mass?"

"It may not be right, but nevertheless God's will," Gillette replied sadly. "Meddle not with such questions, my girl; or, if at all, in the confessional, on your knees before Father Patrix."

Airelle paused, evidently checked a daring speech, and instead made answer, "It seems to me, mother, that we are obliged, whether we will or no, to meddle with such questions. And in daily life, in our homes, not when at church. Look at yourself. Father Patrix disapproved of hiring Judith at the beginning. You, although, perhaps, you hardly realized it, condemned fanaticism by taking a so-called heretic into your service."

"The poor soul, being destitute, was willing to come for next to nothing, and is the best milker for miles round. Father Patrix could not say nay to such reasons."

"When motives of justice and humanity had failed to convince him!" Airelle retorted scornfully. "But I could mention a dozen things that would show you we are better than our teachers and our laws. Charlotte was perpetually saying this, and that ere long both would be changed for the better."

Gillette sighed.

"Change is always dangerous. You risk something even in bartering with a huckster."

"Father said just now that matters are so bad as to be past mending," Airelle went on. "Nothing can well make them worse then. I will read to him what Charlotte copied out for me, passage after passage, from learned men. It had to be done secretly, of course. The sisters were always spying upon us—"

"Not without cause, it seems. Come, my girl," the mother put in drily, "leave Charlotte's high-flown notions alone, and tell me about herself. Is she already betrothed? Will she marry some rich bourgeois of her town, or

gentleman from Paris? Bless her, sweet lamb! What would I not give to see my nursling again!"

"Now you come to the best news of all, for you — for us, I mean. Charlotte still loves you as dearly as ever. I have not yet given you all the kisses she sent; and in my box yonder is a beautiful present for you, a rose and a lily painted by her own hand, and framed to hang up. But here is the news. 'Tell my foster mother,' she said, — they were her last words, — 'I shall come and see you all when the apple trees are in blossom, and the herbage yellow with buttercups.'"

"She won't, she can't," Gillette said, not in a tone of plaint but of resignation. "Years ago when you were a toddler and she a big-eyed, crowing thing, just able to feel her feet, we managed very well. But a demoiselle as she is now: it is not to be thought of. No, I shall never see my little Charlotte again in this world, never, never."

A tear stole down her cheek, and Airelle grew pensive. With a sense of relief, the pair turned to the box. Whilst Airelle on her knees unpacked her simple wardrobe,

Gillette admiringly examined markings and mendings.

"Of course your father and I don't wish you to work a-field with the serving folk," she said. "There will be plenty for you to do indoors, what with your needle and knitting-pins. Not a bit of clothes and house linen but wants repairing, and my eyes are good for nothing at such matters now. Your father wants shirts sadly; and Judith has spun linen for the purpose but there it lies."

"Now look at Charlotte's picture," Airelle said delightedly, holding up the gift — mere school-girl's achievement — a cabbage rose and tiger lily painted on cardboard after the style of the period, framed in filigree, silver thread and beads skilfully put together.

"Charlotte did this, my little Charlotte?" Gillette murmured, lost in wonder and admiration. "I could pluck the flowers, I seem to smell them."

"Read what is written underneath. Ah! I forget, no one ever sent you to school," Airelle cried. Then springing to her feet, and looking over her mother's shoulder, she read aloud, with finger pointing to each letter: "To my

beloved foster mother from her own affectionate Marie-Anne Charlotte Corday d'Armans, July 13th, 1789."

Gillette insisted on a second, even a third, reading, admired the flowers from every point of view, carried her treasure to the door, smiled, wept, chuckled with ecstasy. On a sudden she looked at the eighteen-year-old oracle.

"Airelle, child, won't there be tax to pay upon it?"

"No, no, mother, nor for my guitar either. Trust Charlotte there. Ah! I forgot you did not know—"

Waxing gay at the very thought, Airelle now produced from her deep chest a musical instrument new to Gillette's eyes. Slinging the blue ribbon of her guitar over her shoulder, pressing string and note, she sang an ancient Bessin ballad, song of the Cagot's daughter.

"'Dark and lone is the forest,
Here's my arm, maiden fair!'
'I'm a poor Cagot's daughter;
Fine young sir, have a care!'

"'Cagot's daughter accursèd,
Begone from my sight;

Tho' fair as an angel,
Hobgoblin to fright!'

"Well out of the forest,
She mocks him with glee,
'My sire is rich burgher,
But no coward for me!'"

"We had better hear what your father and the curé say before you use Charlotte's gift," Gillette said, overcome with pride and misgiving. The well-known ditty thus accompanied was delicious. But such matters as guitar practice required thinking over, and she had so little time for thought!

Airelle put down her lute, letting it rest against the wall.

"Not there, child, not in everybody's sight. Hide your instrument away. What business have the like of us with such things, folks will say. And the tax-gatherer, the exciseman, the seigneur's bailiff and his men may be here any moment. You are not in the convent, remember."

"And my books, mother, can't you spare a moment to look at the books Charlotte gave me? Father will like to hear them read aloud, I know —"

"Another time, another time, darling. We have wasted too much already. This is churning day, too; ah, there comes Judith from the milking place! She'll be right glad to see you, I know."

A picturesque figure was the old Huguenot dairywoman as she now rode into the farmyard, across her donkey slung brightly burnished copper vessels, her shrewd, benignant, almost apostolic face, brown and wrinkled as a shelled walnut at Christmas-tide; from under the yellow-red handkerchief, worn turban-wise, peering brilliant black eyes.

Homeward she trotted in the blazing sun, by no means uncheerful despite her circumstances. She had consolations of her own, beside these, bread to eat, a bed to lie on, and, although a pariah in the eyes of the law, accursed by the church, reviled by society, here living in security and peace.

Truth to tell, Judith's heterodoxy had become to be regarded rather in the light of a whim than of a moral lapse by her friends at the farm. She possessed so many excellent qualities both of head and heart, was so valuable a domestic, that one and all attributed her

heresies to sheer spirit of opposition. She was eccentric, whimsical, unlike themselves for the sole relish of the thing. Even Father Patrix would good-naturedly twit her about abstention from man and confessional.

Airelle flew towards the new-comer with outstretched arms. Eudette she could chatter to as a child amid her dolls, but Judith had understanding, a little education and experience of the world. Judith would prove a resource, a confidante.

"Oh, ho, mistress!" cried the old woman to Gillette. "Which have we here, your demoiselle or her foster sister? Like they were as bantlings, like they must have grown up."

"You should see Charlotte before making the comparison," the girl said simply, as bare-headed she helped Judith with her panniers.

The dairywoman looked at her employer significantly, but Gillette turned away. The thought struck her, — you, also, you poor, good woman, have known the pangs and joys of motherhood. What am I that I should keep my own child, whilst yours was torn from your arms, hidden from your sight forever!

Judith never by any chance alluded to the

past now. Was it too remote to pain any longer? Gillette ever forbore to ask, and seldom thought of it herself. Daily life was laborious; work began at sunrising, and only ceased at dusk. Little time had any here for retrospection.

CHAPTER V.

THE EVENTS OF A SUNDAY.

THIS part of France retained curious traces of the Saxon, of invasions and encounters long anterior to the so-called battle of Hesting. Every little farm hereabouts still bore the name of Delle, derived from the "deal" of the northerner two thousand and more years before. Scores of delles might be numbered in the Bessin, each having its surname indicative of origin, natural feature, or local event, historical or traditional. Peace and war, rock and stream, drought and deluge, had given these names of land precision and meaning. Isaye's Delle of the Saraisne or Saxon evidently pointed to some trial of strength long before the Norman Conquest. The country folk concerned themselves little with the original significance of the word. To them delle meant only the lot of land that belonged to them; a certain area undefined by wall, hedge,

or visible boundary. Avril's Delle of the Bog pointed yet clearer to the antiquity of the Saxon occupation. The bog had long ago disappeared; cornfields and pastures covered the former morass; the name remained, and none cared to enquire its history. There were delles and deals everywhere, one and all a little romance to the student of words.

If Sunday was not set apart as a day of unbroken rest, mass and vespers brought repose for man and beast. Whilst the others put on their best clothes, Judith also changed her own in that sepulchral-like niche serving as chamber. A curtain partly screened her from observation, but Isaye, Gillette, and the serving-folk would come and go. No one paid any heed to the artless toilet made on the bed.

Slowly and deliberately — for her limbs were cramped by perpetual squatting on the milking-stool — she arranged scant gray hairs, exchanged coloured kerchief for high white coif, then, free from self-consciousness as a child, doffed her gown or loose jacket, and, in coarse linen shift, with full sleeves reaching to the elbow, and cuirass-shaped stays stiff as boards,

put on white upper garment and best skirt of Rouen serge, clean, home-knit stockings, and large, carpet shoes. Her preparations were not finished yet. Before stepping down, she unlocked the trunk at the foot of the bed, and drew forth a bulky volume, bound in faded velvet, with silver clasps. This carefully-guarded treasure she never produced till all the household had set out for church. Among good people, after the pattern of Isaye and Gillette, she had no fear for her Bible. Delicacy, if not prudence, forbade its display or any ostentation of her nonconformity before others.

The treasure, enveloped in a clean pocket-handkerchief, lay on the bed so long as a creature beside the house-dogs kept her company. No sooner was she alone, than with spectacles rubbed and adjusted, and face turned to the light, she began to read.

Judith's Bible was her only relic of former days, her one link with the past. Those brief se'nnight readings came to her as a great calm, a benison on the laborious week in store. She did not devour the page with spiritual ecstasies or rapt moods of visionary or devotee. She did not seek in the sacred page

resolution of doubt or upholding of faith. But she turned to it as the sole communion that raised her above dumb fellows in service and suffering, the sole response to her craving for individuality, something set apart from the yearly round of toil, something indescribably sweet or solemn.

It never occurred to Judith now to arraign human injustice. Her poverty, her isolation, her sorrows, she attributed to law, in her mind a power akin to merciless, hidden forces. That her husband had died for his faith, that her child had been kidnapped by royal command, her kinsfolk outlawed, and home wrecked, were misfortunes ordained of Heaven, inevitable outcome of social order. Protestants were tortured, banished, put to death, because the law would have it so. But behind the law, backing up man's sins against his brethren, were agencies she could not explain, mysteries unreadable as the tragedy of Nature.

The day had dawned wooingly. Close to the farm, about a patch of crimson buckwheat in full flower, murmured a swarm of bees; farther off, red and white cows showed solid and brilliant as carnelians against the

dazzling blue sky; farther still stretched level sweeps of green and gold, the famed herbage of the Bessin.

"Hush, Pyrame! down, Dragon! quiet, Dinah! will you!" cried Judith.

One house-dog after another began to growl outside, apparently without cause. She had seated herself in the doorway facing the meadows, farm buildings and approach being behind. There three dogs loosed from the chain kept vigilant watch.

"Down, all of you, I say!" she shouted a second time.

Famine-stricken wretches no longer besieged the place, as they had done a few years back; the tax-gatherer, the seigneur's bailiff, the municipal sheriff, would hardly call at such an hour. The dogs were only yapping and snarling for their own amusement, she said to herself. The noise continued, however, and, laying down her precious volume, she crossed the kitchen and unfastened the door.

True enough, a stranger stood outside the premises, trying to coax the hostile pack. No starveling or minister of the law this; rather some bourgeois asking his way.

"Good mother," he said courteously, lifting his hat, "prithee tell me if I am on the right road to a village called Petitville?"

Judith silenced the dogs and bade him approach; as he did so her heart gave a great leap. The white band round his throat told her that she was in the presence of one of her own people, a minister of her own church. After thirty long years she beheld a fellow-Protestant! The revelation took her breath away.

"Come indoors, reverend sir," she said, her discomposure being readily accounted for by the intruder. "I will show you a cross-cut, a traverse through yonder meadows."

He hesitated, fearing to compromise her. She was without doubt a serving woman of Catholic farm folk. What would they say on learning whom she had harboured?

As he stood irresolute on the threshold, his eye fell on her Bible.

"Is it possible!" he exclaimed, now hardly less surprised than herself, but not sharing her emotion. "Can I accredit the evidence of my eyes? I find in this remote corner a sister in Christ, a fellow-sufferer in the

cause of conscience, in the truth, as we believe it."

"You have said it, my son," murmured the old woman, now mastered by joy and grief, joy for the resurrection his coming seemed to her, grief for the memories it called up. She seemed, in scriptural phrase, but not in scriptural sense, to be born again. The long, long years of loneliness, self-centredness, resignation to woes unutterable, toil amid strangers to her creed and her people, had in a moment become as a dream. She lived over again the passionate life that had been hers, — wifehood, motherhood, spiritual communion with beloved ones, a past until to-day buried skeleton-wise under seal of the tomb.

"Be seated, my son," she added, "reverend sir, I should say; but of your age, of your calling, would my own boy have been had Heaven and the laws of the land permitted. I seemed to see him when you appeared on the threshold just now."

Tears rolled down the sun-burnt, toil-worn cheeks. The pastor's somewhat cold, emotionless face softened.

"I too am without kith or kin," he said, the

bitterness of his tone contrasting with her passivity. "Who, indeed, of our people is not a victim? You have had consolation, I see."

He took up her Bible, and turned over the leaves admiringly, and with the air of a bibliographer.

"The translation of Lefèvre, the founder of Protestantism in France and its first martyr, the corrections of the great Calvin! What a treasure have you here! I have always understood that not a Bible in Normandy escaped the clutch of the confiscators. I marvel that you were able to retain your sacred volume!"

"'Twere a long story to tell, sir,—how I contrived to keep my book, I mean, sir. Once under this roof, it was safe enough; and the country folks pay no heed to such things now. The poor souls have enough to do to get a mouthful of bread," answered Judith, still quietly weeping. "Yes, reverend sir, I have much to be thankful for,—a shelter all these years, always a meal to sit down to, neither baiting nor bullying, and that," as she spoke, pointing to her Bible.

The pastor put down the volume, and eyed

the pathetic figure much as a physician watches a patient.

"Be comforted," he began with well-affected cheerfulness. "Justice cannot restore the beloved ones we have lost, cannot undo their martyrdom, our own sufferings. But better days are dawning for all the downtrodden in France. Two years ago, as you of course know, the law pronounced children born of Protestant wedlock legitimate, the King accorded right of private worship."

"So my young lady has just told me," Judith said, wiping her eyes. News of this kind came too late for old folks, her face said.

"Hear further," the other went on, evidently determined to stay her tears, leave some balm behind ere he went away. "The new lawmakers in Paris, the representatives of the people, are bent upon doing more. The accursed work of the Revocation is to be annulled. We are to enjoy the rights of our brethren in free England, the rights accorded to us by the great Edict of Nantes."

He did not seek to explain himself more minutely. He had at once recognized Judith's intelligence and education. A peasant woman,

able to read, and nurtured on the Bible, would understand as much history as was here needed.

The old woman's face showed only vicarious satisfaction, disinterested triumph. She was evidently not thinking of herself but of others.

"Our dismantled churches will be rebuilt; the voices of our ministers, mine, most unworthy among the number, will be heard in the pulpit; once more the little ones of our flock will learn the Catechism, and the faithful break bread and drink from the cup, in commemoration of the Immortal Supper. Our homes are to be rendered inviolate, our consciences restored to our own keeping."

Still Judith heard as one sick unto death, prattle of coming spring and woodland strolls. Too late, too late! was written on every feature.

He went on persuasively, almost reproachfully; how could he more than any other measure the depths of Judith's submissiveness?

"We must think of others, of the blessings in store for them," he continued, the preacher

speaking, rather than the man, a touch of conventionalism mingled with his pitiful words. "We must rejoice to hail the dawn, although not ours to enjoy the day."

"You are not a mother," cried Judith, with suppressed, heart-breaking sob.

That cry, or rather wail, outpouring of sorrows kept back for half a long lifetime, moved her hitherto calm listener. The professional consoler and administer, the ecclesiastic vanished; in his place stood her fellow-sufferer, her brother in misfortune.

"My poor woman," he said feelingly, "you have been sorely tried?"

"Turned for the nonce into a she-wolf," she answered. "But for that," here she pointed to her Bible, "I should, perhaps, have strangled my new-born babe, the one left to me. She died, and I was saved from crime, the law from a monstrous deed. You come across the water, I believe, sir?"

"Ah, you divine something of the foreigner about me? True enough, good mother, I was reared in England."

"You know, of course, what happened hereabouts years ago. You have heard how the

King's officers brought royal warrants seizing boys and girls of Protestant parents, shutting them up in seminaries and convents—"

"Better not recall the past," said the stranger; he evidently shrank from his own agitation as much as that of his listener.

"Let me speak, once, only once pour out my heart," was the passionate answer. "Then, if Heaven so wills it, Judith will go to her rest to-morrow. Hearken, my son; such a son might I have seen standing before me now, but for those wicked laws and ordinances. My babe died; and whilst I lay abed, still weak from the pangs of childbirth, the King's warrant came, we were bidden to give up our little son; his father, minister though he was, resisted, and was struck down. When I recovered, I found myself homeless, widowed, childless—"

On a sudden the speaker's expression changed, and so startling was the transformation that the pastor lost momentary self-control. His cheeks reddened, he trembled, never for a moment taking his eyes off the homely yet magic figure before him. Deep-seated, long-checked emotion now turned the

aged peasant into a fury, but a fury inflamed with natural human passion.

"Childless in a blessed sense! The boy torn from me died — think of a mother rejoicing at her son's death! I did that, and the joy of such mourning saved me. I did not lose my senses; I seemed to have my child still."

The wild, almost maniacal look vanished as quickly as it had come. She dashed away her tears, apparently ashamed of such outburst.

"I milk my cows, I sit at my thump churn, I scour and clean, envying no one. Look you, sir, the good God has made us so. We are something like the animals we tend. Daily bread, nightly shelter, kind treatment, and even broken hearts mend as years roll on. The dawn comes not unwelcomely."

"But your existence will henceforth be brightened, because less lonely," he said. "I am making a tour of inspection. Our scattered members are being got together. We shall build a church in this neighbourhood, — rebuild, I should say, — one of the many demolished at the Revocation."

"I am old, I have toiled hard a-field," Judith replied, shaking her head. "The temple, wherever it is, will scarcely be near enough for me."

"Meanwhile we shall hold services in temporary accommodation. You could surely get to the nearest town?"

"I would try, sir," was the quiet answer.

There was no response, rather shrinking, in Judith's voice and manner. The very sight of the pastor, his soothingness, his smile, were becoming unbearable. She hardly saw a stranger, hardly even a living presence, but, as in a vision, the son of her dreams and stifled memories. Just such a man should her first-born have been; build, stature, lineaments, the colour of hair and eyes, the moulding of nose and chin recalled another also, the lover of her youth, the father of her boy. Dress and calling doubtless aided the similarity. One Protestant pastor is made by force of circumstances to look a little like another. Outside such lendings, in addition to accessories, she now recognized a semblance that was more than painful. She felt enmeshed, entangled in eerie thoughts, pos-

sessed of wizard influences, a prey to unholy illusion.

"Meantime, you shall be kept informed of our proceedings, now, Heaven be praised, no matter of secrecy and device," said the pastor. His manner once more became matter-of-fact. "My name is Eudeline, Jean Eudeline, a Protestant name—"

"And mine too," murmured the old woman, with the same dazed look. "His also," she added in a whisper, as if afraid of her own voice.

"The country hereabouts was full of Eudelines once; mayhap we are of the same stock," was the careless answer. "Well, right glad am I to have found a fellow Huguenot and a Bible here. Now, good mother, point out my road, and I will say adieu."

She accompanied him to the limit of the home-stall; then, giving the necessary indications, turned to go. But, without a word, he bent down, after country fashion, kissing her on either cheek.

Judith did not pause to watch the slight yet manly figure out of sight. Folding her Bible to her heart, as if it were a talisman

against rebellious thoughts, she rocked herself to and fro, sighing, sobbing, uttering names that had not passed her lips for years. The seal was removed from the sepulchre. Her dead lived again.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EVENTS OF A SUNDAY (*continued*).

MASS is often scrambled over in country places; when standing crops are threatened with rain, or any other field work is urgent, the curé will even be importuned to cut his sermon short. From time immemorial the Church had inculcated the duty of a seventh day's rest. But the Church insisted with still more emphasis upon the tithes; trodden-down peasant-folk must perforce forego, or at least curtail, their Sabbath, in order to satisfy King, seigneur, and ecclesiastical tax-gatherer. On returning from mass, many would don working clothes, put their hands to the threshing-flail, or their sorry beast to the plough. Only the more prosperous, in other words, the least unfortunate, could afford to attend both mass and vespers, much less keep a twelve hours' holiday.

Airelle's parents and the Avril family be-

longed to this class. If compelled to omit one service, they were sure to be seen at the other. The pillars of the Church and society, Father Patrix affectionately called both houses.

"No fear of revolt or revolution tainting you," he had said, on first hearing of the events in Paris. "All France may stand on its head, go stark staring mad, I should find you in your senses, my fine fellows."

So spiritless and formal these country celebrations, that only tradition and the force of habit would seem to account for regular church attendance and fulfilment of devotions. Other causes made the peasant conservative. On his obsequiousness to ritual and ordinance depended many a privilege, even Christian burial itself. The unswept, uncared for, often dilapidated interior depressed; prayers and litanies, gabbled in unintelligible jargon, wearied. Day after day, the sermon but inculcated the same observances; neither at matins nor even-song could he hear the least little thing to stimulate thought or feeling, gain never so slight a perception of the spiritual side of existence. Men and women

performed their religious duties, so called, firstly, because remissness would have entailed grave worldly disadvantages; secondly, because church-going implied the only sociability and civic life within reach, — talk of crops, markets, and rural affairs, gossip of family doings. Around the ancient porch, under the shade of beech and elm, youths and maidens would shyly glance and whisper, partners were chosen for the coming dance, marriages arranged. But the church porch was also the village forum. Hither on appointed days, summoned by bell and beadle, the elders of the parish would meet in solemn conclave, that rustic assemblage from which a little later was evoked communal government as existing in towns. Grouped around judge, syndic, and coadjutor, peasants would deliberate upon local questions, set forth their grievances, settle disputes, assess the necessary outlay for church repairs, hear expositions of the law, as their fathers and forefathers had done before them. No longer convenable by order of the seigneur or presided over by seigneurial judge, the councils as yet implied nothing like political life, they referred only

to parochial administration and purely personal interests.

On this especial morning Father Patrix skurried through his service with what a more critical audience would have called indecent haste. No one to-day had asked him to abridge his sermon, but it was the shortest any present could remember. Almost ludicrous was the bustling air of the worthy priest as he got over remaining portions of the ritual; then, blowzed and breathless, hastened into the sacristy, threw off alb and chasuble, and followed his congregation out of doors.

"Good morning, father," said old Avril. "You have come, I'll warrant it, to get a peep at Airelle, to advise me where to look for a daughter-in-law, eh?"

"Good day, neighbour Avril; good day, Isaye, Gillette; the same to all of you, my children," cried Father Patrix, speaking so quickly as to be but half intelligible. "No, no! No moment this for matchmaking! I have something more urgent to speak about, something that concerns not only Airelle and — I suppose — Raymond —"

"Thank you for putting in so much of a

good word for me!" the young man exclaimed, trying to force Airelle into a blush. The girl, however, seemed hardly to notice his words, her thoughts evidently being occupied with other matters.

"Not only young folks and old folks here and for miles round, but the State, the Church, the King!" the curé went on, raising his voice, for the first time in his life moved to enthusiasm. "Approach, every one of you; form a semi-circle; give me all your attention." He paused for a moment, allowing time for stragglers to draw up, for the hindmost to get within hearing. The congregation was a small one, perhaps numbering thirty grown folks and a few children. Old and young men pressed forward, curious to learn the meaning of this extraordinary summons. It was a picturesque scene, — one full of suggestiveness and subdued colour; the old gray church with lofty saddle-back tower, groves of veteran elms affording deep shadow; beyond, the warm yellow monotone, pasture and cornfield under the blue.

Both sexes wore sober-tinted clothes: long-lappeted coats, and breeches of coarse brown

frieze; gowns of dark-blue, or black cotton. For headgear, slouching, broad-brimmed felt hats and the high white coif, with butterfly-shaped wings of the Bessin, these exchanged for the red woollen cap and gay cotton kerchiefs of every day. The quality and condition of material, the presence or absence of patches and of shoes and stockings, proclaimed gradations of circumstance; on the whole, but for two or three professional beggars, — bundles of rags and fictitious sores, — all had a tidy appearance. No bourgeois element was visible. Only Airelle's dress indicated coming change, the breaking down of iron barriers between proletariat and the privileged class. She had put on her Sunday costume, as worn at the convent on fête days. For head-dress, the dainty cap of white muslin, and bows of coloured ribbon, a frill falling over the forehead, plain blue dress and white kerchief crossed in front, and forming a sash behind. With other daughters of better-off peasants, she also wore a chatelaine of silver at her waist. She looked so beautiful thus attired that neither Isaye nor Gillette had the heart to remonstrate.

Just now eyes were turned elsewhere. Not even the shaggy-polled, gipsyish children, hanging to mothers' skirts, thought any longer of Airelle's unaccustomed toilet, the first of its kind witnessed by many. Father Patrix's strange excitement, his vehement, even wild manner, his loudly reiterated command, awed, frightened. Babe and grandsire stood aghast. All listened breathlessly, all except Airelle.

She alone seemed ready for what was coming, as if she knew, to a word, the passport of his menage.

"Hearken, my children," the priest continued, warming as he went on, waxing really eloquent in spite of physical drawbacks, steaming brow, cheeks red as a tippler's, spluttering mouth. "Hearken as to a true friend, for enemies under the guise of benefactors will not be slow to pour poison into your ears. Tell me, now, you, my worthy Isaye; you, honest Father Avril; you, Raymond, Lambert, Elie, and young men as yet, but each having a head on your shoulders, do you for a moment believe, can you look me in the face and declare, that these things are right?"

He fumbled in his pockets one after the

other, brought out first a red cotton pocket-handkerchief, next a handful of green nuts, at last, after much ado, a crumpled news-letter.

"I allude of course to what is being transacted in Paris, by the government, that so styles itself, — by the National Assembly forsooth! Is it right, I say, that the distinctions Heaven has made between man and man be set aside, that in a week, nay, a day, an hour, the noble, the priest, your King, forfeit privileges consecrated by the assent of ages, the voice of tradition, the seal of authority? Is it right, nay, decent, that the heretic, the Jew, the very negro, should be placed on a level with Christian Frenchmen, children of the Church? I put it to you, honest, God-fearing, pious fathers and mothers, will you stand by and see the laws of your country trampled underfoot, the safeguards of loyalty, religion, domestic morals hurled to the ground, the demolishers of everything we hold sacred, set up as judges and law-givers?"

All remained mute with varying expression. The greater number stared and tittered in hopeless bewilderment. Isaye and Gillette respectfully awaited further information. Avril

the elder gazed keenly inquisitive, his benignant, far from ordinary features lighted up with a strange smile.

His sons listened almost jeeringly, the two younger taking their cue from Raymond.

Only Airelle looked as if she must speak. She checked herself, however, and Father Patrix, having regained breath, went on:—

"Let us take one point, Taille and Corvée, the body tax, the road tax paid by you peasant folk, but not by noblesse and clergy. Why is it so? Why are you compelled, and righteously compelled—"

"Oh, father," cried a clear, girlish voice, then stopped short.

Father Patrix whipped out his coloured pocket-handkerchief, and brushed away an imaginary wasp or caterpillar. It seemed impossible to him that Airelle's interruption could refer to anything more serious.

"To fill the royal treasury, make and mend the King's roads? Why, indeed? Simply because you can do nothing else for him. Is not the life of duke, marquis, count, one long service to the throne? Where do you find the noble, pray, unless in the camp, at Versailles,

at foreign courts? Would country carles like yourselves be able to replace them there, think you? A fine figure you would cut, sirrah, in velvet and gold lace, with a sword dangling between your legs! And the clergy! Is any one here capable of the monstrous thought that God's anointed, those who serve the altar, administer the holy sacraments, ever were, ever can be, rendered taxable? No, my children, shut your ears to false prophets, turn your backs upon insidious counsellors, resign yourselves to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, to be taxed, to be sweated at the King's good pleasure, as were your sires and grandsires before you."

He paused, adjusted his spectacles, and holding up the printed sheet, prepared to read. Then, as if overcome with repugnance, rather positive loathing, he folded and refolded his paper, tore and tore again. A minute later and the hateful fragments were fluttering in all directions.

"No, no, my children!" he cried with tears of rage and mortification, "not from my lips shall you learn the abominable gins set for your simple understandings, the pernicious

measures proposed in the name of patriotism, the blasphemies audaciously put into black and white. List to these new advisers, follow these new leaders, and ere another generation see the light, France will be naught among nations, her very name a derision; her fate, and deservedly, that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Nineveh and Babylon."

"Might we know the last news from Paris, father?" asked Avril the elder, in his quiet, shrewd way.

"News?" repeated the curé. "You will soon have a bellyful, my good man. Aye, be gorged with it till you vomit as a dog filthy carrion. I tell you the country is doomed, throne and altar, justice-seat and seigneury. The National Assembly, — that ever the name should desecrate these lips! — the self-made government at Versailles, has set at naught every other authority in the kingdom, is hacking and hewing at time-honoured institutions, as a woodman set to fell rotten trees."

"But surely, father, authority is vested in the National Assembly," Airelle put in very gently but firmly. "The States-General was composed of representatives of the people.

The States-General, now constituted a free parliament, is empowered, has the foremost right to make laws."

"Hush, hush, my daughter!" Gillette whispered, pulling the girl's sleeve.

But from all sides arose a clamour. "Let her speak. Let us hear what Airelle has to say."

"Only that," she replied, not looking down or colouring, all the same disinclined to render herself conspicuous. "Forgive me, father," she added, still addressing the priest. "You have often lamented abuses that you said amended laws might set right."

"Go on, go on!" echoed a dozen voices. Eudette, hardly comprehending the questions at issue, only with the faintest possible glimmering of the truth, was yet more excited than any. She giggled, clapped her hands, patted her young mistress on the shoulder, looked ready to fall down and worship that incarnation of loveliness, spirit-daring.

Father Patrix stood stock-still. Misinterpreting his attitude, even Isaye and Gillette remained passive, whilst the Avril group egged on the maiden orator. The rest

stared agape, young and old, now for the first time hearing the voice of Truth. Modestly, yet with self-assurance inspired by noble sentiments, Airelle went on: —

"Is not death punishment enough for the malefactor? Is any good done by torturing him for hours, refusing his agonized entreaty for the death-blow?" She put her hands to her ears with a look of horror.

"A poor creature was broken on the wheel at Caen a year or two back; from our upper windows could be seen the executioner breaking one limb after another — his piteous shrieks seem to reach me still. All day we heard them and till far into the night, and his crime? He had cheated the King's customs of a little salt!"

The crowd neither moved nor uttered a syllable. Airelle's voice electrified them.

"There has been no justice in France. The poor are at the mercy of the rich," she went on. "Last year a noble demoiselle left the convent to be married. In her wedding trousseau figured letters-patent according her husband the judge's ermine; in other words, the

purchased right to imprison, torture, put to horrible deaths."

"Tell us more, more!" cried one voice after another, the curé still standing dumbfounded.

"It is not so in free England, the country over the water," she continued. "There the accused is not straightway condemned; he is tried, is allowed to have witnesses, an advocate. There men's consciences are not interfered with; they may belong to any religion they please. Taille and Corvée again, the body tax, the road tax. Oh, father," she said, turning to the priest with a look of appeal, "the peasant is no longer a serf as in the evil days gone by, but still laws keep him in bondage. If the National Assembly gives us better ones, shall we not obey and rejoice?"

Father Patrix had just recovered self-possession, and once more found his voice, when something quite unexpected came to pass. The storm of ecclesiastical wrath was not to break over Airelle's head just then.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EVENTS OF A SUNDAY (*continued*).

THERE broke through the beechen grove two figures wild as animals with the hunters at their heels. Both were young men; and, rushing forward, making desperately for the church door, they told their own story. No need for that agonized cry, "The train-band! the train-band! the King's soldiers! the soldiers!" they shouted, pointing over their shoulders.

Not a soul present, not even Eudette the witling, misunderstood the case. These sturdy tatterdemalions were certainly fleeing before a recruiting party of the King's militia, seeking escape from enforced service; in other words, prison fare of black bread and water, insufficient clothes, iron discipline and every conceivable hardship.

Preferring to risk their chance at the drawing of numbers to mutilation of right-hand thumb, a common device in country places, these two had evidently been drawn, and

afterwards deserted. The altar no longer accorded right of sanctuary; but the church door stood open, the church was empty. It was clearly their intention to bolt themselves within, and defy their pursuers. Had such an occurrence taken place a few months before, the little assembly under the beech trees would have remained passive or even aided and abetted the pursuers. Desertion was punishable by the galleys, loss of nose and ears, the gibbet; any one sheltering the fugitives incurred severe penalties. As a rule, therefore and against their better nature, folks held aloof from interference. The wretched conscripts were given up.

But all things had changed in France since yesterday! Something stronger than the law was making itself felt throughout the length and breadth of the land. Public opinion now replaced tradition. The voice of abstract justice had silenced that of privilege.

Hardly had the panting, staggering figures crossed the sacred threshold, when clattering hoofs and clashing steel were heard close by; through the sunlit foliage glinted sabre and musket, issued stentorian voices.

"In the King's name! Stop the runaways in the King's name!" cried the soldiers.

Raymond at once took the lead. Less moved, perhaps, by the spirit of the times than by innate, hitherto suppressed turbulence and revolt, he sprang forward; his brothers, Herculean in stature as well as strength, were not slow to follow. In an instant, accomplished none knew how, the foremost rider was unhorsed, disarmed, and sent sprawling; the other shared his fate; a third held at bay.

"Keep the church door," shouted the leader, infatuated by the possession of firearms. "Shut the pair in and make fast the church door, I say."

Several present wanted no second bidding. There are things that the scatter-brained understand as readily as the solid of intellect.

Giggling, bawling, gesticulating, stone-deaf to remonstrance, Eudette picked up the biggest stone lying near and, shoving in the runaways, planted herself against the old oak portal. Half-a-dozen sturdy wenches did the same; the younger men with their staves pre-

pared to succour their ringleader. Vainly might the terrified priest entreat a parley; thrown to the winds were the high-pitched counsels of Isaye and Avril the elder, the prayers of Gillette and other cool-headed matrons. A spirit of resistance had broken forth none could check or resist.

And as there is ever a mixture of farce with human tragedy, laughable indeed were certain aspects of the fray. Through the openings of the beechwood galloped one riderless steed; across the flower-starred meadows trotted his fellow. Now Father Patrix shouted threats of excommunication, and now Eudette's shrill laughter egged on the assailants. One luckless militiaman tumbled head over heels, to the delight of the barefooted, shaggy-haired youngsters; a second in his fury seized the wing-like appendage of the first grandame near, who proved more than a match for her assailant. This incident gave a comic aspect to the scene.

"Well done, grandmother! at him again! at it, my goats!" cried village wags, as the tugging and butting went on.

Still more uproarious was the merriment

when another stout-hearted crone stepped up. Catching the soldier's long hair, she pulled it so vigorously that he let go her neighbour's lappets and howled for mercy.

"You will all be put in prison, you will be sent to the galleys, torn with red-hot pincers, haled to the whipping-post, lose your ears, your tongues, I say! swing for it on the gibbet, I tell you!" vociferated the poor priest, desperately concerned for the safety of his flock, no little also for his own reputation. A scuffle with the King's soldiers, a set fight — on the Sabbath day, and within sacred precincts! Could anything be more compromising?

"Isaye Aubery and you, Gillette, his wife, — you, Father Avril, too, — are you in your senses?" he cried. "Do you know what you are aiding and abetting? Open revolt, downright revolution! The King is still King, I warn you; the law is still law in France. Surrender the deserters; let the soldiers go."

He was but counselling sticks and stones. Isaye and Gillette, pulling Airelle by the sleeve, had indeed drawn back. Avril in the first instance had endeavoured to restrain his

sons; it was, however, easy to see on which side lay their sympathies. They looked on passively, bewilderingly, unmoved by their confessor's threats and exhortations. To these temperate, reflecting minds, as to the most turbulent spirits, resistless was the newly-heard voice of liberty, of brotherhood! They were led onward, they knew not how or whither.

Although unhorsed, disarmed, the soldiers yet showed a bold front; their comrades were close behind. They never doubted of final victory. Still calling on the people in the King's name, they made for the church door.

Now Eudette's missiles began to fly, and fierce grew the encounter. As yet not a shot had been fired; but the possession of firearms, for the first time in their lives, acted as some strong stimulus upon Raymond and Lambert, his second but weaker self. No other incident could have so heated their blood and roused their passions. The new sense of power literally intoxicated, maddened them. A musket — anything in the shape of a gun or weapon — was a second title of nobility in France, — a privilege exclusive as that of armorial bear-

ings, or the right to keep a pigeon-house and rabbit warren. And everything had changed within the last few days. They possessed the firearms and they meant to keep them. The fugitives were under their protection, and should be protected. Give up two honest fellows who ought to be getting in their own harvest instead of robbing others, as the King's soldiers were forced to do from sheer hunger? Surrender their brethren? Send them to the galleys or the gibbet? — not they.

"Peace, father," Raymond said to the priest, as he spoke gently pushing him aside. "We have heard one sermon to-day; surely that is enough." Then, turning to the militiamen, he levelled his gun. Lambert followed his example.

"Come," cried the leader, "no more ado, my men! Off with you, or" — here he swore a big oath — "true as my name is Raymond Avril, you will be forthwith sent to purgatory!"

There was a dead silence; not even the youngest present uttered a scream. Even Eudette suppressed her giggling; one and all were awed by Raymond's aspect. Ever a masterful, unruly spirit, foremost in village

brawls, reckless in speech as well as bearing, irresistible to women by reason of his strength and his beauty, to-day he seemed a stranger. The athlete had become a giant; the hero of a thousand escapades was transformed into a paladin. Even Airelle could hardly repress a thrill of admiration, she to whom his untamed animal nature had hitherto been repellent. Who could find fault with his vindictiveness, his ferocity, tempered as they now were by natural human impulse and brotherly feeling? The train-band was composed of men like himself, creatures born of women, made of flesh and blood. But the tools and engines of tyranny are perforce tainted with the tyrannous spirit. Will not a scintilla of manly, humane instinct keep even the hungry from enlisting in such ranks? The half fainting fugitives in the church belonged to the peasant class, were one with the little congregation; all the sympathy lay with these.

"Help, help, in the King's name!" again shouted the prisoners.

Despotism has its code of honour as well as justice. Not one of the three showed any disposition to surrender.

Raymond, making a sign to his brother, manipulated the firelock, now for the first time in his hands; and that momentary delay brought about by inexpertness prevented bloodshed.

Quicker than words can say, in the twinkling of an eye, a man's figure stood between Raymond and his victim. None knew whence he had come, none had observed his approach; all realized at a glance that no minister of the law was this, only a chance wayfarer drawn hither by the soldiers' cries, yet the effect of the apparition was instantaneous. The young peasants stood aghast, downcast, ashamed, their arms slackened. The little crowd drew a deep breath. A stranger, at the risk of his own life, had saved them all from participation in murder.

"A word, only a word with you all," began the intruder, as raised to his full height he confronted his listeners. "Hear me for a few minutes, then," he added in a voice of mingled pity and scorn, "then shed blood, desecrate these precincts, befoul this sacred day, dishonour your name of Frenchmen, if you will."

As he stood there, bareheaded, in the

clear, transparent light, Airelle recognized the speaker. She had surely seen that tall, attenuated, yet muscular figure, that face, spiritualized yet unsoftened by suffering, had heard those keen, penetrating accents. But where? On a sudden she recalled the incident in the café, the recipient of her newsletter. It was the pastor so cavalierly, even brutally, treated by Father Patrix.

"Preach away!" Raymond made rough answer. "Only look alive, don't keep us long."

Eudeline, still keeping well between the brothers and their target, in other words, the inwardly trembling militiamen, seemed by no means disposed to hurry himself. His deliberateness, his cool, even contemptuous indifference to orders, not only ensured general respect, but something akin to awe. He leisurely wiped the beads of sweat from his broad forehead, surveyed his audience, with just perceptible change of countenance, recognizing Airelle and the priest, bowed low to both, then began: —

"Is it possible, can it be, that I am speaking to men and women ignorant of what is taking place in our country—changes so momentous

that they affect the humblest as well as the greatest of the community? My brothers, my sisters, lay aside your arms, your missiles, your vindictive looks. No moment this for enmities and shedding of blood, rather for peace-making and paternal embraces! Boys and girls," here he turned to the large-eyed, shaggy-haired urchins, adding without caressingness, without the smile of the child-lover, rather as one to whom childhood recalls bitterness only, "remember the day a stranger thus tells you of under these trees. I thank Heaven that I am the first to speak of the Fourth of August."

Here Father Patrix, crimsoning with mortification, endeavoured to interpose; but Raymond held up his musket, enjoining silence. Emboldened beyond control by the morning's events, Eudette called out: —

"The other's sermon, father; we want the other's sermon!"

"The Fourth of August, now but three days old, shall I tell you what it has done for us? will you all listen?"

"Speak, speak," Raymond cried, shouldering his weapon. "It will be the worse for any

one who tries to stop you, I can tell him or her," he put in, glancing towards Eudette.

"To-day, then," resumed the orator, "one and all may listen to me, the Protestant preacher, without incurring fines, imprisonment, death. To-day you heads of houses, fathers of families are no longer bondservants of King, seigneur, Church, but free citizens; the humblest as well as the greatest has a right to his own conscience, to worship how and where he please; henceforth rich men equally with the poor must pay the King's taxes, help to maintain the public roads; henceforth the law like a good mother takes all under her protection, no more pillories and carcanet at chateau gates, no more rack, boots, and thumbscrew in the King's prison."

He stopped short and glanced first at the proud possessors of firearms, next at the scowling, vindictive soldiers.

"Take my advice, good friends," he added, with the stern smile habitual to him. "Fraternize as boozing idlers at a fair, rather than deal in blows and bloodshed. You honest fellows," he said, addressing himself to the brothers, "don't get into trouble by stealing a

pair of muskets when you are now at liberty to buy as many as you like. You, militiamen, shoulder your guns, recapture your sorry steeds, and make what haste you can to head-quarters. No one will ask for your runaways, I'll warrant. The train-bands are dispersed by order of the National Assembly, the citizens of every town are enlisting, forming a National Guard for their own good pleasure."

His listeners looked at each other. What were they to say, to believe?

Raymond and Lambert showed no disposition to relinquish their prizes. The soldiers looked as unwilling to go away empty-handed. At last Avril the elder stepped forward and, hat in hand, glanced from pastor to priest.

"We are simple folks," he began very modestly. "Father Patrix yonder, our curé, has just bidden us to look askance at these changes; no good can come of them, he says, only harm to ourselves and the country. Neighbour Aubery's daughter," here he pointed to Airelle, "was endeavouring just now to explain matters; she has been well educated and is the only learned one among us."

Airelle, encountering the pastor's eyes, smiled,

coloured, and looked down; again had come into his face that softening, secularizing expression; asceticism, hardness, vanished as by magic.

"Whilst she was speaking," Avril went on, "came yonder deserters and the militiamen at their heels. You, reverend sir, declare that the National Assembly is doing the very best, not only for the like of us, but for France. Time will show. Meantime how stands it with ourselves and the poor lads behind the church door? Is it quite certain that we are not resisting the law, that no harm will come to us all by harbouring them?"

"Avril, are you mad?" Father Patrix put in huffishly; "at three score years and five you encourage sedition, open revolt, go against the biddings of your spiritual father. Am I priest of this parish or is it yonder stranger, yonder outlaw, who holds the key of my church authority over my flock?"

"Nay," Eudeline said, anxious to put an end to the scene. "My interference, reverend father, had to do with mere humanity, brotherly feeling, not with doctrine or teaching of the Church. I was fain to avert a

crime, to explain the irrationality of such conflicts at such a moment. One word more. On my own head I take the responsibility of this rescue. Bid your parishioners surrender their arms, the soldiers let go their fugitives, these good people to return to their homes. I am bound to the town, and will at once betake myself to the bailiwick. The affair shall be accurately reported, and, unless I am much mistaken, you will hear no more of it. Meantime —" He stepped forward, and, hat in one hand, held out the other.

"You and I, reverend father, shall not we two set an example of brotherhood, inaugurate the new era dawning upon our country? Give me your hand, sir. Let the past be forgotten; if there have been victims on my side, persecutors upon yours, the law rather than conscience, unjust ordinances rather than individual uncharitableness, have been to blame. Let us each go our own way, doing what spiritual good we can, neither enmity nor suspiciousness marring the work."

There were signs of approbation among the little crowd of bystanders. Airelle's head was bowed as if in prayer; but the ruffled priest,

without so much as vouchsafing a word, turned on his heel, making with all speed for the presbytery.

Still Raymond hesitated. He stood frowning angrily at the interloper, this stranger, baulking him of his prize. These fine theories were all very well, but a firelock costing nothing was more to the purpose.

"Come, my lad, come," Isaye said gently.

"Take the sieur's advice," put in his father.

"Raymond!" cried a clear, girlish voice; and flaming with passion as he was, irritated, above all, that she should be on the other side, he yet gave way.

A few minutes more, and the beechen grove was deserted, the cavaliers, recovering horses and arms, trotted back to the bailiwick, the runaways sought another hiding-place, the villagers returned home, and Eudeline pursued his solitary tramp. But the day's events were not over yet.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SUNDAY'S CLOSE.

THROUGHOUT evil and prosperous days, throughout the varying fortunes of century after century, folks danced away care on Norman soil. The dance was a veritable passion. When no open space could be had elsewhere, youths and maidens footed it merrily in the village churchyard. Not even the curse of war, not even the fiercer scourge of religious persecution, arrested pipe, tabour, and dancing feet. Came dire pestilence and famine, came the thrice accursed Revocation, ruining the towns, depopulating the villages, young and old danced on. Heaven had pity on the peasant of feudal France. But for this innocent passion, this clinging to mirthfulness, how would he have escaped petrification, reserved that capacity for better things, so conspicuous when the opportunity came?

As a rule, lighter labours, alike afield and

indoors, were resumed between mass and vespers. Isaye would do any carpentering and plastering necessary, Eudette would weed the leeks and salads, — potatoes were as yet an unknown luxury of Norman vegetable gardens, — Judith's spinning-wheel and Gillette's knitting-needles would keep each other company.

The great heat and the events of the morning seemed to render the little household lethargic; for, once routine was broken, Eudette, her head muffled in her apron, snored on the granary steps; Isaye sauntered about listlessly; Judith, between waking and sleeping, muttered to herself; only Gillette and Airelle seemed alert.

"Call your father," Gillette said when the pair had been sewing for some time, squatted on the doorstep. "I want you to tell him all about our Charlotte. But first come inside. I have something to show you."

The doorstep was a favourite seat in country places, and no wonder! Household work is got through so much more cheerfully in the light and open air. Thus meals were prepared and taken, every task that could be accomplished under such circumstances was got

through here. Very slowly and deliberately, Gillette unlocked the clothes-press, and pointed to the closely-packed shelves. From top to bottom all were full of homespun linen.

"I have heard my mother say," went on the housewife, "that no sooner was a woman-child born to her, than she began to spin and lay by for her trousseau,—a pair of sheets one year, a tablecloth the next, and so on and so on; never twelve months without a bit of linen for my housekeeping when I should have grown up. I did not wish you to be worse off as Raymond's bride—"

"Mother!" Airelle cried, her serenity gone in a moment.

"The union was planned by your father and his, years ago," Gillette went on placidly as before. "Raymond is unruly, quarrelsome, noisy, but he comes of a good stock; he is a brave workman, and will inherit house, furniture, and a field or two. Could you aspire to more, my daughter?"

The good woman held the doors of the clothes-press wide, her benignant face mildly radiant with satisfaction. Not a linen fold but recalled hours of patient toil, privation upon

privation, self-sacrifice upon self-sacrifice. The history of each piece, written from this point of view, would equal in length that of the material itself, — smooth, solid fabric produced from hempen grain.

Airelle's agitation was soon over. No time this for marrying and giving in marriage, she said to herself. For the present she felt safe as far as Raymond was concerned.

"The linen will keep, — and Raymond can wait," she said, kissing her mother by way of thanks. Then, breaking off, — enchanted to escape into another world, the lyric life of Charlotte, of song, of eloquence, she added:

"Father shall hear me sing Charlotte's ballads, recite Charlotte's favourite pieces."

Somewhat shyly Isaye obeyed the summons.

Before sitting down he lingered on the threshold, peering around, called to his dogs, made himself quite sure that neither seigneur's bailiff, King's tax-gatherer, nor municipal exciseman, was hovering near. Despite Airelle's asseverations to the contrary, that innocent musical instrument had a dangerous look. He could not for the life of him help believ-

ing that the guitar was contraband, taxable, even seditious.

The eventful forenoon had bewildered him. It was impossible to forecast the future. One thing seemed certain, for good or evil, great changes were at hand.

"Only look at our child, just listen!" Gillette cried, moved to tears of marvel and ecstasy.

Isaye's eyes filled also as he watched the little performance: that throwing of the blue ribbon about his maiden's shoulder, that skilful pressing down of keys and pinching of strings, then the old Bessin song of the Cagot's daughter, —

> "Dark and lone is the forest,
> Here's my arm, maiden fair,"

with its sprightly, almost mocking accompaniment. The whole thing seemed miraculous, past credence.

Sweet as were girlish voice and melody, entrancing as was the performance, Isaye yet listened with an uneasy conscience, an undefined anxiety. He ought to have mentioned the matter to the curé or notified the pos-

session of the guitar to the custom-house officers. What if Charlotte's gift should lead to mischief, to fines, perhaps heavier penalties? Again, his Airelle had been educated by the ladies of the Visitation, but she remained a peasant's daughter, would become a peasant's wife. Not for her the graces and accomplishments of noble ladies and rich bourgeois. Not for her the reading of learned books and discussion of public affairs. During the last hour Isaye had pondered on the form of his rebuke — how best to check her impulsiveness, prevent any further recurrence of the churchyard scene. Revolution abroad did not so much disturb the worthy peasant as certain signs of the times nearer home.

To the girl had come a still deeper mood.

Not noticing her father's unsettled expression, she laid aside her instrument, secretly wiped away a tear, and sitting down opposite both parents, began: —

"Now let me tell you both about our Charlotte. Ah, you should hear her play, sing, recite! But her skill in music, in declamation, with the paint brush, the needle, these are nothing. It is Charlotte herself who is

unlike every one else — so much more generous, single-minded, far-seeing, than all the world. It was not really the Sisters who educated me, but Charlotte. Father," she added, "do not blame me for speaking as I did to the neighbours this morning. I but repeated Charlotte's lesson."

Gillette looked at the partner of her toil. He waited and listened, as long as might be putting off an odious taste. Were Raymond son of his, what easier than to admonish his unruliness, his fierce temper! How to chide this gentle girl whose utterances had such a ring of truth and convincingness?

"Did the Sisters know that you talked of these things?" he asked.

Airelle coloured with eagerness rather than shame.

"The ladies of the Visitation were very good to me," she said. "I shall ever owe them a debt. But they compelled us to be underhand, to deceive them in many things. We were watched like criminals night and day. Charlotte's high spirit could not brook such treatment. She said that at least our thoughts belong to us, should be free as air."

"Ask your confessor that, my daughter," Isaye put in, mildly reproachful.

"Thoughts that we need not blush for, I mean," Airelle continued. "Thoughts that do us honour and not discredit. You heard, father, what the stranger, the Protestant pastor, said. Were not his words manly, honest, inspiriting? None can say no."

"Such a man may be worthy in himself, but he is not one of us, not entitled to hold forth upon such subjects as law, religion, and the like. Remember, child, that he is a heretic."

"Father, can there be real religion in anti-religious feeling, in hounding down our fellow-creatures just because they really care about the things they believe in?"

"If the things are wrong, Airelle, forbidden by the King and the Church, contrary to the law of the land? But, as I said just now, consult Father Patrix, be guided by him. Your mother and I are simple folks, we cannot decide upon such matters."

"I will read to you on winter evenings from Charlotte's books," Airelle went on eagerly. "There will be a parcel for you to bring back

from the next St. Lô fair, father, left at the Rising Sun. And Charlotte will write often."

Husband and wife uttered an ejaculation of dismay. The very notion of a letter was revolutionary. Not a rural postman existed in France under the Ancien Régime. Epistolary correspondence seemed on a par with armorial bearings, pigeon-houses, weather-cocks, carcanets, and other insignia of noblesse. Missives were long on the way and expensive affairs to both writer and receiver. Of what good, moreover, were letter-carriers so long as country folks could neither write, read, nor procure pen and paper?

"Letters cost money, my girl," Gillette began, then stopped short again looking at her husband.

"Letters are liable to be opened by the lieutenant of the King's police," Isaye rejoined. "Have you thought of that? They might get us into trouble. Ask your confessor, child; he will tell you that it might be so."

"But such tyrannies are at an end. Did you not hear what the stranger said?" Airelle replied, with a touch of impatience. "Would he, above all others,—but yesterday an outlaw,

a heretic, — have dared to make such assertions unless they were true? Would he dare openly to wear clerical garb, the minister's black dress and white neckband, had not things changed in France?"

The pair listened, quite unable to arrive at any conclusion, both fascinated, awed by the young enthusiast, hard it seemed to believe their own daughter. Isaye's remonstrance was put off yet awhile, Gillette took refuge in lighter topics.

"Now tell your father more about our Charlotte," she said. "Speak of her suitors, her dowry, and the like."

"Nay, I have idled too long already. I must bestir myself abroad. The pigs are crying to be let out," Isaye replied. "And that lazy wench Eudette has snored long enough."

He looked like a man craving yet dreading solitude; such, indeed, was the case. For the first time in his life, Isaye saw himself confronted with problems. Hitherto all had been clear as daylight, straight as the King's highway, existence a mere matter of making ends meet, wrenching the wherewithal to be housed,

fed, decently clad, from the hundred-handed monster called Taxation.

To-day subtler questions, complications far graver, more intricate, were before him; he was called upon to decide between abstract theories, directly opposed ethical systems.

"Airelle shall tell me the rest this evening, on the green," he added, glancing at his daughter.

"Must I join in the round? I would rather stay with Judith, father!" she exclaimed.

"Not make merry among old playfellows? Not give your hand to Raymond, your future husband? What whim is this?" Isaye said, gentlest of the gentle even in his rising displeasure. "Better forget the convent and Charlotte altogether than let them set you above your own people and your position in life."

He did not pause to say more or to await Airelle's reply.

"Don't vex your father," Gillette said, soothingly. "And remember what a fellow Raymond is to work, — what an arm he has for the scythe, the cider-press, the flail. Two men in one, folks call him, as well they may.

There is not his match for bodily strength and will in the Bessin, — nay, nor in the Cotentin either."

Habitually of few words, the good woman prattled on. Raymond was this, that, everything but tame; a wife would tame him, she said, and Avril was better off than any peasant for miles around. His eldest son would have the family homestead, a bit of land, a few Louis d'or to boot. Airelle heard coldly. Not a point in the long eulogium but discommended him in her eyes. She trusted for deliverance to chance, to the stormy times, to Revolution.

From time immemorial youths and maidens here as elsewhere had danced on Sundays and fête days, sometimes on the stretch of sward before the church, sometimes in field or meadow. Not in such rustic assemblies were seen the dances of court and château, — stately saraband, elaborate minuet, airy passe-pied. Nor had Normandy invented any measure of its own. The Auvergnat could boast of his bourrée, the people of Gap possessed their gavotte; the hard-headed, practical Normans were satisfied with the artless round, adaptation of

the Pyrenean farandole. Very rarely was seen rigodon or musette. The round, requiring no skill, could be enjoyed by young and old. Were sackbut or vielle tied with coloured ribbons wanting, the round could be accompanied by voices only; folks just joined hands, singing and dancing as children about a Maypole. Elie, Avril's youngest son, stole up to Airelle, hoping that the others had not noticed her approach.

"I want to hear you talk again," he said shyly; "more about the Revolution, about Charlotte."

"You remember my foster sister?" she asked.

"As if I did not! Will she ever come here again?" he said. "I should well like to see her; she must be a wonderful creature—"

The young man stopped short, and, as he gazed, his looks said that he saw another wonderful creature before him. Very unlike his brothers was Elie Avril. Raymond's overpowering bodily force, his fierce, wild handsomeness were wanting; equally absent Lambert's echoing habit, indecision, and neutrality. Elie's strength lay in qualities the other two lacked. There was depth

of feeling, — feeling wholly apart from mere passion, — capacity for sentiment, thought, insight here.

"Join hands with me in the round," he said, an expression on his face of simple yet fervid joy, — the delight of finding something beautiful, something to adore.

The pair were just of an age, ever a bond with sympathetic spirits. Twinships need not be of name or race. Nature, as well as human nature, has her dual and triple births.

It was a rollicking scene, — a picture of bold outline and splashes of brilliant colour. As crimson poppy dropped into crystal bowl the sun lay low, mere blotch of deepest red upon the clear heavens. Fierier still the afterglow that caught these sunburnt, ruddy faces, each upturned as if to catch it, their white teeth making scintillations of light, the dark locks of the men tossed back, the wing-like coifs of the women fluttering like white pigeons about the motionless foliage. Not a leaf stirred, and, in the interval between day and night, — hardly to be called crepuscular, — every object was luminous and clearly defined. No soft,

mysterious haze wrapped the landscape as in northern zones. The merrymaking was uproarious. Dancing, keeping time with voice and foot, were neither taxable nor contraband. Once a week toil was forgotten. Self meant something, — self and sex! Under the Ancien Régime, as now, a pretty girl made the poetry of the work-a-day world. Swains paid rustic court, damsels coquetted, all the while footing it merrily, singing in loud chorus.

Airelle and Elie breaking the ring had just joined hands. The young man's pulses quickened; his heart beat with an emotion unknown but yesterday; his companion's voice as she joined in the refrain was the only one he heard, when a wild dash was made at him from the opposite side.

"Raymond, Raymond!" shouted a dozen voices. The speakers might have remonstrated with the wind.

Elie was rudely flung aside; with loud exultant laugh, his elder brother took his place.

Against her will, Airelle was forced onward, compelled to go round with the rest. Such horseplay at rustic assemblages was too common to call for more than jesting rebuke.

Elie's discomfiture but heightened the general hilarity.

With Airelle it was not so. She felt afraid of this man whose hands held her own with almost brutal grip. She quailed in presence of his fierce, ungovernable, paganish nature. To her mind the act was a piece of savagery, portending evil to herself, a struggle to be encountered unaided and alone.

CHAPTER IX.

RESURRECTION.

A PICTURESQUE figure was Judith as in the pure light of dawn she ambled to the milking-place. At this season of the year her early ride was no hardship and throughout the winter months cattle remain afield in the Bessin. Nearness to the sea moderates the temperature, snow seldom lying here on the ground. Thus from Noel to Rogations, from Pentecost to All Saints, might be seen milkmaids on their donkeys, swung across pannier-wise, their brightly polished vessels gleaming as they went. Milking is of all farmhouse tasks the most laborious, but Judith, although well past threescore, was sound as a prize apple, only stiffness of limb, whitened hairs, and a tendency to drowse over easy tasks recalled the fact of impending age. She never regarded her present lot as one of hardship; in a certain passive, animal sense, might be said to relish existence.

"I am like my cows," she would say. "The day comes and the sunshine and the herbage. I don't think of myself, of what is gone, of what is coming; I just let the years steal by; that is the best way for one in my case."

Routine had not hardened a naturally clinging, affectionate nature; it had only checked sensibility, subdued passions and inclinations, rendering her automatic. But the pastor's visit was as a resurrection. Outwardly unchanged to others the cheery, toilful, self-effacing handmaid of old, she was not in the least the same. The wife, mother, widow of former days lived once more. Dawn, sunrising, the green earth no longer made her world; as she sat on the low milking-stool, she envied those passive four-footed companions to whom she was wont to liken herself. A great wistfulness had taken possession of her, a long-lost personality reasserted its claim. The one hour of existence hitherto her own, the Bible reading on Sundays, no longer sufficed. She yearned for the voice of her own people and fellowship with those of her own faith. Long-buried sorrows had been disinterred; only spiritual communion could now uphold and comfort.

Would the stranger remember her? she wondered. Should she indeed be privileged to worship openly, to hear the exhortation from the pulpit, join in the songs of praise, in the commemorative bread-breaking at the altar?

Over these dreams she brooded as a maiden over lover's vows. Such hopes and aspirations took commonness from daily toil, lent halo and solemnity to servile tasks. As she rode afield, she would nod to this neighbour and that, ask one after his ailing cow, another after his litter of piglings, her thoughts all the while being elsewhere. The general disturbance, the great doings at Versailles, the Revolution, meant so many things; to Judith, a Sunday service only, one Sunday in a Protestant temple before she died! Persecution had fanaticized the victims. Judith would have suffered death rather than attend mass.

This Norman farmhouse possessed nothing answering to the modern dairy; the bowls of milk would be placed in the coolest corner of shed or outhouse, butter-making being done anywhere.

When Judith had taken down her panniers, tethered her donkey, and enjoyed a hunch of coarse bread and mug of barley drink, she would scour her vessels, finally sit down to thump-churn or spinning-wheel. Not an instant of the week day was wasted, not a task performed indifferently. There would have been degradation in such laboriousness but for the heart put into her work, the evident satisfaction brought by each well-performed task; one and all wore the look of a religious duty.

A few days after the eventful Sunday just chronicled, she sat at her churn as usual, Airelle shirt-making by her side, the rest of the household being abroad. Eudette might indeed be called ploughwoman, so entirely did her business lie in the fields. Gillette, too, lent a hand at corn-cutting; on Airelle devolved the lighter service within. Very silently the pair now plied churn-staff and needle.

Thud, thud, went Judith's stout stick into her tall, cylinder-shaped vessel of cream; the churner squatted before it, lifting her arms mechanically, a pendulum not more uniform in its rise and fall.

"Do let me take a turn," the young mistress had said, more than once; but Judith shook her head.

"I am more used to the job, darling. You keep me company, and just look on."

Week after week, month after month, year after year, Judith had thus sat at her plunge-churn; scores of times during a single morning would her heavy staff be raised and dropped ere the butter came. It never occurred to her that the task was wearisome or monotonous, and hitherto she had performed it unmusingly, thinking, as she would say, of nothing. To-day she not only thought, she pondered.

Unwonted quiet reigned over the place. About the pink and white buckwheat now in full flower murmured the bees; occasionally a clucking would be heard among the hens, or Judith's donkey would bray, as if to give a sign of good-fellowship; otherwise, all was still. No sign was here of the tempest sweeping over France, no sign of the passion stirring these two hearts. For the last hour, both had been summoning courage to speak out and to make confidants of each other.

"Judith!"

"My darling!"

The pair broke silence at the same moment, simultaneously opening their lips in eager appeal. Judith's butter had now come, she could rest awhile and speak without interruption.

"Listen," she said, first glancing around, herself hearkening, lest any eavesdropper should lurk near. "I have not mentioned to any living soul that a stranger was here last Sunday, the very same who prevented bloodshed in the churchyard. Your father is a mild man, your mother has never given me a frown, much less a harsh word, but they stand in awe of their confessor, for the most part they are guided by him. They would perhaps think it a grave offence to harbour one of my own people."

Just then loud barking outside announced intruders; Airelle, springing past Judith, hastily called off the dogs. But to-day there was no need of interposition. The humanities belonged to dogkind as well as to the race of man. These knowing creatures at once recognized Judith's decent guest of a few days before, and fawned upon him with friendliest welcome.

Eudeline stood still, taken aback at the unexpected apparition, evidently unprepared to find Airelle here.

"Can I speak to a serving-woman, a Protestant named Judith Eudeline?" he said, after formal greeting, his voice not that of a suppliant, rather of one who demands a right, of one, too, ever keeping strictest watch over himself, afraid of giving way alike to humbleness or pride.

"Judith is here," Airelle said, standing aside, "and you look hot and footsore, sir; pray come inside and put down your burden."

The pastor hesitated. He feared to compromise herself and her companion, his face said.

"I am the daughter of the house," the girl added, with that innate composure and dignity characterizing the better class of peasant, with that self-reliance and initiative due to Revolution and Charlotte. "I beg you to take a seat and accept refreshment."

Eudeline, inclining his head to Judith, followed his young hostess within; her presence fascinating him as his own held captive the old dairywoman. For never maiden hung

upon lover's looks, never bride more tremblingly adored bridegroom than Judith seemed to worship this outwardly cold, irresponsive Calvinist minister. He placed his cloak-bag on the table, then seated himself near it, all the while watching Airelle.

Quite naturally, and without false shame, she brought out the best she had, a half-finished loaf of hard barley bread, a jar of soft cheese, a mug of cider, then adding huge clasp-knife, bade him partake.

The fare required a good stomach and teeth to match, but the most delicate regale and choicest wines would have owed something to such a handmaid.

Tall, strong, yet fair and graceful, with that look of maternal benignity and protectiveness some girls manifest from their childhood, Airelle unconsciously betrayed other qualities. Depth of feeling, a habit of reflectiveness, decision, all these were hers and gifts rarer far than mere beauty.

The pastor's scruples were set at rest in a moment. He felt that he might safely accept her hospitality. Right heartily he fell to after his long tramp in the heat.

"I bring welcome tidings to this good mother here," he said, glancing from entertainer to fellow-Protestant. "Our churches are about to be rebuilt, our service openly performed as in free England. Meantime—"

He stretched out his hand toward the cloak-bag.

"Meantime," he went on, still addressing Judith, all the while having neither eyes nor ears except for his hostess, "our scattered congregations will be got together in temporary buildings, and already, ten days hence, I inaugurate the new era at Bayeux. You can surely manage to join us?" he added, turning suddenly to Judith. Airelle, misreading the old woman's dazed look, answered for her.

"My parents cannot refuse our Judith one day's holiday, the first she has ever asked for, and we will find means to help her on the way," was the direct, unfaltering reply. Then, still standing by the table, her hands resting on it, she watched Eudeline as he unlocked his shabby valise. What were those shining things he now drew forth so gingerly? From folds of faded violet velvet protruded silvern rim and handle.

"I marvelled to find one of my own people

under this roof. I marvel still more at every word that falls from your own lips," he said. "Your father and mother must be of truly Christian spirit or they would not have sheltered a heretic, so called, all these years. But where can a maiden like yourself, of orthodox parentage and bringing up, have acquired ideas so large, so rational, so revolutionary? Mind, I do not for a moment condemn those of your religion for their prejudices against mine. Man has been set at enmity with man by vicious laws, made inhuman in spite of better instincts and judgment. Who first taught you, then, that a Huguenot like myself was a brother, that individual conscience is sacred, interference with individual belief the greatest crime a king, a state, a church can commit?"

Girlishly curious, Airelle still watched the half-hidden, glittering objects on the table. With glowing cheek and quickened pulse she replied as she gazed:—

"You will never believe it. A girl of my own age, my foster sister, with whom I was educated in the Convent of the Visitation."

"Catholic born and bred also?"

"Catholic born and bred, sir. Oh, if you

could but hear her talk, my Charlotte! But what have you there? Look, Judith, look! Chalice for the consecrated wine, paten for the sacramental bread, flagon, too, all of solid silver and richly chased. Is it possible, reverend sir, that such vessels are used in your ceremonial, that you, too, hold commemorative feast?"

A smile, rather the shadow of a smile, softened Eudeline's habitually stern features. Answering the query with a monosyllable, he turned to Judith, for the moment bent upon the enjoyment of her delight, with almost filial gentleness holding up each piece of plate for inspection.

"You have, doubtless, already knelt at the altar in years gone by, covertly, tremblingly, at peril of life and limb, with sisters and brethren, celebrating our Lord's Supper. You will now receive the sacred symbols from my hands, the solemn reunion, not marred by a sense of imminent danger. But you are overcome with sorrowful memories, good mother. Your hands tremble, your eyes grow dim."

Judith's first exclamation had been of admiration, naïve and hearty as Airelle's. Then, bending down, she minutely examined handle

and border, pattern and legend, finally averted her face.

"Take them away, good sir!" she cried. "Hide them from my sight, ewer, cup, and paten, — one and all are lost treasures at last unearthed. Aye, as flesh and blood, husband and first-born risen from the grave! We are but poor, weak mortals," she added, with a look of keenest anguish; "however strong our beliefs and lively our faith, not for us the awfulness of resurrection, the rolling of the stone from the sepulchre, the sight of our dead become alive again."

Eudeline glanced at Airelle significantly.

"I do not suppose that another set of church plate — Protestant church plate, I mean — is to be found throughout Normandy. How any escaped confiscation is a marvel — the story is too long to tell. Doubtless the poor woman has sipped from this very chalice, taken the symbolic bread from the self-same paten."

"The same! As I live, the identical vessels used by my husband — your father, I feel tempted to say, sir, so like are you to him I lost in my youth; but husband and first-born,

both are dead — dead, and put in the ground without Christian burial."

The minister very carefully and deliberately replaced his service, Judith's eyes following him ravenously. Whilst he dropped words of pastoral uplifting and sympathy, she looked ready to fall on his breast with ecstatic recognition, her rapt mood tempered, held in check, by a desolating sense of heart-breaking glamour. This man was merest stranger. Why, oh, why, must she be thus deluded, held in thrall?

Eudeline also was struggling after self-mastery, fighting against forbidden thoughts. As Judith, fain to have him before her sight for ever, yet longed to break the spell and recover her sanity, her freedom, so the pastor lingered against his will. For Judith's sake he had come, but for Airelle's he staid. A harder, sadder life than his own could hardly be; strange that the first ray of sunshine should bring such a conviction home to his mind. He began to pity himself.

"Dwell on the better days in store for others," he said to Judith, the words shaming him in their hollowness. He felt that here

the physician most needed healing. "I am rejoiced to find you in such friendly hands."

Judith got out, stammering thanks, and seizing her heavy churn, made for the out-house. Here was physic indeed; daily toil offered healing alike for body and mind. She should grow reasonable over her dairy work, become the Judith of old over her milking. The pair looked after her in pitying silence.

CHAPTER X.

A TALK ABOUT CHARLOTTE.

"JUST in time, let us hope that these better days have come, just in time for yonder much-tried woman!" said Eudeline, as, standing by the table, he locked his cloak-bag. "Do you know her history? But why do I ask? It is the same as my own, as that of all my brethren and sisters. Fortunate, perhaps, beyond most of us, she has found peaceableness and charity."

Airelle looked down for a moment, as if under the weight of implied reproach. Then, with generous warmth, she pleaded a cause, just now that of her kinsfolk and neighbours.

"It is the King's will, the Church, that have made Judith a heretic, not the conscience of the people, her fellow-subjects. My parents are no exception; even Father Patrix, our curé, who treats you so arrogantly, has a

kind heart. He has been forced into bigotry, into regarding the Huguenot, the dissident, as a vile thing. The neighbours, again, how can they help being guided by their confessors? What other teachers have they had?"

So grave their words, so high their theme, that Eudeline's inquisitorial glance called forth no blush. She met his eyes without shrinking.

"You, at least, have been better off in that respect. Once more I must express my astonishment at the largeness of your views, your capacity for reflection. How, within the four walls of a convent, did you learn to think, to weigh?"

"I had Charlotte!" Airelle cried, her face changing in a moment.

It was not mere affection that now irradiated, but a feeling deeper far, the joy of adoring something high above herself, of being privileged to adore. She never dwelt upon reciprocity here. She loved Charlotte as her inspirer, her ideal; what mattered it whether Charlotte, in turn, loved Airelle? And this outwardly cold, austere listener was fast becoming a friend, simply because he cared to

hear of her darling, because she interested him.

"I understood you to say that this girl was a fellow-pupil and foster sister, your mistress. She would then be of your own age?"

Airelle still stood by the opposite side of the table, her hands resting on it, her face eagerly bent towards his own. The youthful figure, grace itself, yet grace attired with strength, needed no fictitious setting off. Nothing could have better suited that bright head so beautifully set on the shoulders, than the coarse, working-day gown of blue Rouen cotton, a plain white cambric kerchief worn round the throat, not the least little thing for ornament.

Eudeline could not for the life of him stir an inch.

"Does wisdom belong to age only?" she said, in a tone of gentle rebuke. "Was not Joan of Arc, she who saved France, a maiden? And Charlotte would die for her country, too; die gladly, I feel sure, if the need arose. Where does such heroic temper come from?" she added. "Why are some so unlike kith

and kin, the very parents to whom they owe their existence?"

He was silent. The same question presented itself to his own mind, as he compared herself with her surroundings. How had this peasant's daughter come by such high spirit and noble temper?

"I must tell you," she went on, feeling, somehow, that her listener could understand many things apt to be misunderstood by others; "Charlotte's home was not far from the convent, and for the last two years my holidays were spent with her. We used to read her father's books together, — he possessed many books, — and copy out passages to learn by heart. We read of other states, of better laws, of the duties of citizens towards each other, of the benefits of freedom and justice. Oh, how happy is Charlotte now, to find that France also, our own country, is to become free!"

Enthusiasm such as hers he was not capable of, but he smiled quietly. Her rapture touched him.

"You also believe in Revolution?" he asked.

"Can any doubt? You yourself have just been uttering the same thoughts. Surely all who care about the good of their fellow-creatures must feel the same."

"What is she like, this Charlotte of yours?" he said, after a pause.

Airelle's cheek glowed; she made answer with brightening eyes. The very mention of her friend seemed to embellish and inspire.

"How can I draw her portrait? You know we Catholics say, beautiful as Mary, the Blessed Virgin; all that Charlotte is, yet different. She is not dove-eyed, mild, languid. Oh, no! when passion moves her, lightning seems to flash out of her dark eyes, and her very calm is unlike the silent mood of others. You see that her thoughts are deep and far away, that even when hemming a handkerchief or fashioning a silken flower, she is settling some hard question in her own mind. The ladies of the Visitation grew impatient; all the time Charlotte hearkened and obeyed. They realized that in reality she was educating herself, and that their worldly wise maxims had no weight with her."

The minister smiled.

"Alas!" he said, "her fate will be that of other girls similarly placed. Your heroine will marry some rich bourgeois, and in her turn become worldly minded and commonplace."

"You do not know Charlotte, or you would never say that," was the reproachful answer. Then warming with her subject, Airelle added passionately, "Some way will surely be revealed for noble, self-sacrificing natures in these new days. Even women will have an opportunity of serving their country and immortalizing themselves."

The glow of rapture faded, the ringing note changed to one of intense sadness.

"I shall, perhaps, only hear of my Charlotte's fame. It seems to me that we have taken leave of each other for ever. You can understand how it is," she went on confidingly. Every moment of sympathetic talk brought the two nearer together. Airelle felt as if she were addressing no stranger, rather a high-minded friend. "Twin sisters could not be fonder than we two. But she belongs to a noble, albeit impoverished, family; she descends from the greatest poet France has ever seen. Ah, how proud that descent makes her!

and she will surely wed one of her own rank. I come of humble stock, my destined portion is that of a peasant's helpmeet. Our paths lie wide."

"Those who cultivate the soil are no longer serfs, compelled to marry fellow-serfs by seigneurial order," Eudeline said. "Such a state of things has long since passed away, at least in Normandy. Revolution is doing the rest. Your father no longer belongs to an inferior caste, his only child is not necessarily condemned to the lot you forecast."

Airelle, still standing opposite to him, her hands resting on the table, looked down, a sudden fit of shyness had overtaken her. She felt so sorely, so desperately in need of a friend, a counsellor. Yet how difficult to get out her confidences.

"I cannot go against my parents' wishes," she stammered at last. Then seeing that he awaited more, she added, "They have betrothed me to neighbour Avril's son, him you lately saved from crime."

Eudeline's cheeks flamed and eyes glistened as those of a man stung by keenest affront. In a moment he was dumb, his gaze fixed on

the simple, yet dignified figure before him with an expression of reverential pity. But quick as lightning came another mood. It was self-commiseration Airelle read in his habitually stern features, as she ventured to look up. This strong, much-tried, hitherto victorious nature had become suddenly weak, in his turn calling for tenderness and soothing.

"If it is as you say, Heaven help you, Heaven help us both, I should say, were I other than I am."

Bitterly ironic he added: —

"You have made me almost forget that I am still socially if not legally an outcast, the cagots or lepers of former times hardly more so."

"Oh!" Airelle cried, hardly thinking of herself now, momentarily lost in impersonal dreams, "these deadly animosities must gradually give way to more human, more charitable feeling. Charlotte and I were always talking of this, of the universal brotherhood to come."

He rose to go, as he shouldered his burden answering in the same cynical tone.

"But not yet. It is quite likely that I shall be pelted with stones the very first Sunday I celebrate Protestant worship. Your old serv-

ing-woman too, perhaps she had better hold aloof for the present, we cannot tell what may happen."

"If I could only keep her in countenance! But I must hear what my parents say," Airelle exclaimed. This time he smiled indeed.

"You have showed me too much friendliness already, and I have also staid too long. May other wayfarers better repay your welcome!"

The pair heard Judith's wooden shoes as she clattered among her pails and skillets, but they did not bid her come to say farewell. Neither the pastor nor Airelle could trust themselves to say a word more. Without a steadfast look of parting, only a hurried glance, he set off in the direction of the town.

He had hardly got beyond the farm buildings when the girl roused herself as if from a dream. Taking a huge home-made broom, she began to sweep the kitchen; sitting down to her needle-work seemed impossible in her present mood. The uneven, irregularly paved floor swept clean, one or two feathered intruders being turned out in the process, she put

bellows to the ashes, swung a copper vessel of vegetable soup over the flame and made other preparations for dinner. No setting of the table was necessary at this time of the year. Master, mistress, and serving folk each took bread and pottage, and regaled on the doorstep, on a tree stump, anywhere so long as it was out of doors.

The first to come home was Eudette.

Unprovided of course with the luxury of a watch, not always within hearing of church clock or bell announcing lauds or angelus, Eudette, nevertheless, showed the punctuality of a minister of state. No one could remember her late appearance for dinner or supper. This invaluable habit and her persistent lightheartedness rendered the apprentice an important member of the household. When only nine years old, Eudette, the foundling, had been articled by the parish to her employers after Norman fashion; and the deed of apprenticeship, formally stamped and attested by a notary, wore in her eyes the dignity of a pedigree. Thus she regarded it.

She now heralded her approach by a peal of laughter from the stable. No one taking any

notice, she gave another resounding guffaw; this signal also proving ineffective, she proceeded with her uncollaring the horse's head in the manger. She shouted: —

"Master, mistress, what's up, think you? Judith, Airelle, are you all deaf?"

No one seemed particularly anxious for Eudette's news. Isaye, returning from the clover-patch, hung up his scythe, washed his hands in a stoup-like hollow of the outside wall, then entered the kitchen without so much as looking back.

Gillette, who had been washing by the brook, set down her basket of linen and passed by silently. Undaunted by such apparent indifference, Eudette laughed and shouted on, bursting upon the group as the church clock struck twelve.

"You don't know what I know," she said, as she seized her steaming bowl and squatted sideways on the doorsteps.

"We might not be much wiser if we did, my good wench," Isaye replied, tossing a huge piece of bread into her lap.

"The folks are pulling down all the churches at Bayeux," Eudette began, giggling joyfully

as she stuck her sound white teeth into the bread; never richest cate tasted sweeter in the mouth of epicure.

Her listeners plied the ladle unmoved. Eudette had so often repeated cock and bull stories that no one took the information seriously.

"They are pillaging all the bakers' shops at Caen!"

And once more Eudette laughed aloud. The very rumour of mischief exhilarated her, yet a more naturally harmless creature did not breathe.

"Raymond is off like a shot," chuckled Eudette. "Ask Father Avril."

The apprentice had one failing; she could not be made to realize the abstract value of truth, the necessity of speaking veraciously for veracity's sake. When desirous of being believed, she invariably challenged corroboration.

"What are you saying there, my girl?" asked Isaye, at last glancing up.

"Ask Father Avril, I tell you," Eudette retorted, now feeling all the importance of a newsmonger. "We were ploughing alongside, Raymond, Elie, and I, when the beadle came

up. 'Have you heard the news?' shouted he. 'The devil care I for news,' quoth Raymond. 'You'll care, I suppose, when they begin here the fine work going on in the towns,' bawled t'other. 'Fine or no, it would make no fine gentleman of me,' Raymond replies. Says the beadle, 'Humph, I don't say that! but you'll soon hear bells ringing, drums beating, the new maréchaussée, national guards they call themselves, scouring the country.' 'The English, the goddems come back?' asks Raymond, whereupon the beadle laughs in his face, and bids him go to Bayeux and to Caen. 'The churches are all coming down, the bakers' shops and granaries are being plundered,' he cries, and away he turns, Raymond after him."

Eudette, fairly overcome with the humorous side of her narrative, now set down bread and skillet and imitated Raymond's flight, showed her hearers how he threw the ropes over his horse's head, flung his whip to Elie and strode off. "He'll help 'em," she added, laughing uproariously. "How I would like to see it all, one steeple tumbling down after another, and sacks of corn flung into the river."

"Girl, are you heathen born and bred? Are

you made of wood or stone?" said Isaye, with as much sternness as he was master of, but Gillette pulled his sleeve.

"Let her be, let her be," she said gently, "but do you, husband, go to the village and enquire what has happened. Maybe, the events mean trouble at home. We ought, perhaps, to have some protection for our crops and beasts. And Father Patrix—"

"And Charlotte," put in Airelle; "get all the news you can, father."

"And Pastor Eudeline," was on Judith's lips. Might not a reckless popular rising mean danger to the Huguenot as well as to priest and noble? But she held her peace. Without Airelle's sanction she felt unauthorized to mention Eudeline's visit.

The remainder of the meal was taken in silence, only Eudette broke from time to time into furtive laughter. As a brownie admitted to fireside fellowship, she was one of the household, yet remained apart, her elvish, unreasoning ways contrasted with the sobriety of the others, her uncouth personality endured for the sake of blind animal-like trust and serviceableness.

CHAPTER XI.

REVOLUTION NEAR HOME.

ALL that day the church bells of Le Rosel rang out an alarm, lights burned on the high altar, and low masses were celebrated every hour in the chapel of the Virgin. Such moments as could be spared from these duties Father Patrix devoted to his flock. Blowzed and breathless he ran hither and thither for news; of news he could never hear enough, in spite of anxiety and trepidation relishing the excitement. One innocent weakness manifested itself even at such a time. His visits to less needy parishioners would be invariably paid at meal times. The days were evil. The rural clergy could with difficulty get their tithes in kind. A mess of soup or dish of galettes were not to be despised. A four-o'clock repast is taken in Norman farmhouses, called the collation, bread and cheese, cider or barley drink being served out of doors or at home, as the case may be. The poorest gets a snack.

Gillette, with uneasy glances directed towards the road, was cutting portions of afternoon bread for her woman folk when the curé appeared.

"Isaye is not back yet?" he asked.

"Would to the saints he were. The least thing sets me a-tremble in these days," Gillette replied.

"True enough, you could knock me head-over-heels with a feather, too, but I shall feel more like myself when I have had a mouthful. I have come at a lucky moment, I see."

"You are most welcome, father; pray be seated," said the housewife. "For myself, I have little stomach."

"You have heard the news?" put in the priest; "the very last, I mean."

Gillette let fall her huge, wheel-shaped loaf of bread now in its third week, and gazed on the speaker dismayed.

"Deaf folks are the best off just now. I am surfeited with news, father. I only wish an emetic would set me right. It is true, then, that Raymond is off?"

The fact that her neighbour's son, her daughter's betrothed, had joined the iconoclasts and rioters affected Gillette more pro-

foundly than the destruction of images and pillage of granaries.

"Raymond! If news began and ended with a devil-me-care like that! But to think of his brothers! Lambert, who, as far as I know, has never before given a sign of evil propensity, — or, for the matter of that, of good, — a mere nonentity, an echo! To think of Elie, the tractablest fellow in the parish, a youth you might do anything with, promising as a healthy sapling — to think of him dying on the gibbet or, likelier still, on the wheel, his limbs broken one by one by the hangman! For, mark you, good mother," Father Patrix said, between each sentence doing justice to his collation, "the National Assembly, — as this precious crew chooses to style itself, — the National Assembly may abolish this, that, or the other: the outlawry of heretics, the stake, the wheel, and the thumb-screw, and so on and so on. Its own turn to be abolished will come, and that pretty sharply, too — take my word for it."

"Lambert and Elie off?" got out Gillette.

"Aye! and if you do not tie Isaye to yonder table by the leg, he'll give you the

slip also, that's certain. And when there is nothing more to be got out of the towns the mob will scour the country. You peasant folk have begrudged the King his road tax, his body tax, the seigneur his rights and dues, the curé his tenth. You will now find out what Revolution is going to do for you. Another bit of bread, my good Gillette; Revolution gives me an appetite, anyhow."

Gillette, without swallowing a morsel herself, dispensed liberal hospitality. She was not in the habit of questioning her confessor's opinions. Here, however, she felt bound to defend her husband.

"Pardon, father," she said meekly; "I don't think you ever heard Isaye begrudge the King's taxes. He has only felt that the road tax and body tax should be paid by rich as well as poor."

"Tut, tut!" cried the priest huffishly. "Is the noble, the seigneur, no better than the hind, the country carle? Shall marquis and count, sirrah, not enjoy the privileges God has given them? These questions are far too deep for your simple understanding, good mother; leave them to the wiser, and mean-

time—" He emptied his mug, shook his lapful of crumbs into his palm, then, with head thrown back, swallowed them as a pill. "Meantime, immediately Isaye comes back, send him to the presbytery. I tell you the villages will share the fate of the towns. We must look to our own safety, barricade our houses, make fast our churches. Can you lend me a barrel of tar, a few pitchforks, and a dog, a first-rate biter?"

"My husband will surely be here soon; I will send him to you at once."

Gillette spoke with a troubled air. She could not realize the dangers just suggested. Foremost in her thoughts was Raymond. With most sonless women, she adored manly beauty and strength. Raymond's daring had hitherto charmed rather than dismayed his would-be mother-in-law. What, indeed, if the gallows should be his end?—and Lambert the echo, Elie the gentle? Were they with him doomed to violent death and ignominy? These motherless lads almost seemed her own. It was Gillette who had looked to their Sunday shirts, and prepared them for the first communion; Gillette who had ad-

ministered home-made remedies in their youthful ailments.

The priest's voice recalled her to actualities.

"Where is Airelle?" he asked snappishly.

"I know what you would say to my daughter," Gillette replied. "She displeased you that Sunday afternoon; but there are natures you may bend, not break, father. Airelle is one of these. Better deal gently with her; leave her to herself."

Father Patrix took up his stick muttering with temper: —

"It is all of a piece, — fire and pillage, the confessional deserted, young women setting up opinions of their own! I told you from the first how it would be."

"Excuse me, father. I ask your pardon, but indeed and indeed you advised Isaye and myself to accept the offer of Mademoiselle Charlotte's relations, and let the young lady's foster sister be educated at the Visitation."

"When was a man right — were he Pope, Sultan, Emperor of China — and a woman wrong? Ah, I know you, you daughters of Eve! Well, if I am torn from my bed and assassinated this very night, I have nothing

on my conscience as far as my flock is concerned. What ungodliness has crept in is the work of the Evil One, not mine;" and with that the discomposed priest turned away.

It was late when Isaye returned, bringing old Avril with him. The women were already taking their supper, — all four seated on a bench out of doors. No sound broke the sultry stillness, but far off intermittent clang of bells; the tocsin now rung from end to end of Normandy.

"Ho, Father Avril!" cried Eudette, hilarious as if she had just received her New Year's gift of a piastre. "Raymond, Lambert, and little Elie, what will they bring us from the fair?"

"Hush, wench!" Gillette said reprovingly; then rising, without a word, she served the new-comers. In peasant homes, as in châteaux of the olden time, it was ever the housewife, the mistress, who ministered to a guest. When she had twice replenished Avril's horn and bowl she looked at her husband for information.

"Say what you have to say, and, when you have supped, go to the presbytery," she began.

"Father Patrix was here just now; he declares that his life is in danger."

Isaye ejaculated impatiently.

"About as much as yours and mine! Look you, wife; it is not harmless folks like our curé that the mob wants. The famished wretches — pillaging granaries and bakers' shops at Caen, as they did a year or two ago at Rouen — scent other game. One learns a thing or two in the cabaret nowadays."

"You have been to the town, to St. Lô?" asked Gillette.

"I should not have been much wiser had I staid at home," was the reply. "Why these bread riots? Because the wheat and the flour have been kept back by connivance, and the people know it. They might starve, as long as the cornfactors get their money and the Intendant his perquisites."

"But the holy images, the churches," Gillette added with a nervous look.

Again Isaye shrugged his shoulders and uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"You know the kind of crowd that collects at a fire, a sale, a fine funeral — any show to be seen for nothing. Where do all the bare-

foot, tattered, desperate creatures come from, swarms of men, women, children, more like hunted animals than human beings? No one can tell, or why they break images and pull down churches either. There must be something in the air. I advise neighbour Avril here to go to sleep as if his three lads snored around him."

"You think they will come to no harm?"

"Now, wife, are the King's prisons big enough to hold all Normandy, all France, I might say? For one thing is plain," added Isaye, moving to the door, "the entire country is on the side of the National Assembly, honest folks as well as the tag-rag and bobtail."

Leaving the women to soothe Avril's remaining fears, with a dog at his heels, Isaye set out for the presbytery.

Dignity and a habit of deliberation are hereditary endowments of the French peasant no less than thrift and laboriousness. In those village assemblies by the church porch, rustic parliaments convened by bell and drum, his ancestors had acquired the give and take of public life, the capacity for compromise, the sense of responsibility due to some share in

the common weal. Not a vestige of political liberty had belonged to the privilege; but from the earliest times, questions of local import were there discussed in conclave; heads of families voting sums for the reparation of church, clock, and presbytery, for the salary of beadle and syndic, discussing the right of wastes and commons, settling disputes with seigneur or ecclesiastical lord. The State, throwing the public burdens entirely upon the public, concerned itself with one business only, the exaction of taxes. When the last sou had been wrenched from the husbandman, his time and sinews were taken instead, the hated corvée or enforced road-making being the last device of a bankrupt despotism. Meantime, for the sixty-seven francs seized of every hundred, the tax-payer received what? Neither security in times of peace nor protection in times of war, neither succour during periods of famine and pestilence nor education for his children, neither means of transit nor freedom in buying and selling — in fine, nothing. The King's wars, his debaucheries, his very dungeons and torturers were kept up at the poor man's expense.

The Ancien Régime was as the Evil Genie of Arabian story, France a mere slave of the Lamp. Folks toiled, suffered, submitted, but not without reflection. This quiet, taciturn Isaye was by no means wholly unprepared for revolution. The village forum had taught him to weigh, ponder, and look to ulterior consequences. Slowly yet surely he now realized the stupendous changes at hand. The events of the last few months were modifying his views upon every subject; his personal relations, his civic status wore a wholly new aspect. He had ever respected himself; it was now a new self that he was learning to respect.

Many a mile had he tramped in the heat that day; and by sunrise next morning he would be afield. But without apparent effort, the straight, stalwart, muscular figure marched on, at intervals pausing to listen.

The night was one of unwonted silentness and transparency. All the more solemn sounded that echo of church bells, tocsin of a score of towers, now rising, now falling, on the ear, caught up to the right, to the left, pealing across the level landscape. Le Rosel was no village in the accepted sense of the

word; farm-steads being scattered; churches, presbytery, and beadle's cottage forming a group apart. The mud-walled, thatched presbytery was indeed a farmhouse of the better kind. Father Patrix being paid in kind, had his grange for the tenths of wheat, barley, buckwheat, and hay; his poultry-yard for the tenth chicken; his piggery for the tenth pigling. He possessed, also, a plot of pasture, garden, and a cow; what was rarer still, indoors, a library of fifty and odd volumes; among these, "The Perfect Cook," in four quartos, the "Code of Curés," the "Conscience Cases of Pontas," and several works on theology.

Isaye's way led him by the graveyard, at such an hour an eerie spot, even to minds rational as his own. In the luminosity of the night, — a silveriness due neither to moon nor stars, but to intense purity of the air, — tall wooden Calvary and rude whitewashed crosses stood out with startling effect. Objects that made no kind of impression by day now wore an unfamiliar, ghostly look.

No stouter heart than Isaye's beat throughout the Bessin. Unlettered, unversed in the

ways of the world, he yet possessed a sanity, a circumspection, that many a more philosophic spirit might have envied. He feared, indeed, nothing but dishonour. To die in his bed, without having disgraced himself, without having been put to shame by kith or kin, such was his artless ambition.

To-day's events had shaken him a little. He felt that he was hardly himself, when he suddenly stood stock still, made the sign of the cross, and tremblingly invoked his patron saint.

"Hush, Pyrame! down, sirrah!" he murmured to his dog, who fawned upon him, whining plaintively, as if for protection.

The sacristan and beadle in one still plied his ropes in the lofty, saddle-back tower, but feebly and with pauses, as if overcome with weariness. The little group of buildings close by was dark and silent. Nothing stirred.

Nothing except a white apparition flitting about the graves, stealthy phantom, now here, now there, its spectral whiteness shining in the pearly dusk!

Every village hereabouts had its ghost or fay, for the most part malevolent. There

was the white-robed wraith of Argonges, who haunted certain precincts, crying, from time to time, "Death, death!" There was the White Lady of Aprigny, who barred the way of midnight travellers, proffering a fair hand, to touch which was to drop into an unseen chasm. Then there were legends innumerable of the ghosts of the departed, souls unredeemed from purgatory, who thus endeavoured to inspire their descendants with pity. More terrifying still were the popular stories of sorcerers in priestly garb, men leagued with the Evil One in order to ruin the unwary. Many a time had their victims been seen held aloft by triumphant demon, irrevocably lost, for having glanced at the Grimoire, or book of spells.

Thought Isaye to himself, "No more as I live will I scoff at such tales!" Vainly he tried to speak or move. Pious awe, rather than abject fear, paralyzed alike tongue and limb. For the first time in his life he found himself confronted by the weird, the inexplicable.

The brave peasant breathed hard; a sudden self-searching mood took possession of him. Might not the portent be a solemn

warning? Had the revolutionary thoughts and dreams of the last few weeks incurred Divine displeasure? Were those theories of freedom and brotherhood now in every one's mouth mere snares set by the eternal enemy? Again and again he tried to advance and interrogate the vision, but his lips refused utterance, his feet seemed part of the ground. And all the while hither and thither glided the shape, now approaching, now receding, nothing distinguishable but white cerement-like garments, ghostly as the upright crosses around.

Pyrame now gave a low growl and, braver than his master, seemed ready to spring. The dog's cry broke the spell.

"Don't you know me, Pyrame, old boy?" said a familiar voice, the supernatural vanishing with the first syllable.

"Good God, father!" ejaculated Isaye, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. Was the good curé stark mad?

Throwing aside his lendings, hooded mantle of a Capucin brother, lately left in his charge by a friend, Father Patrix went up to the pair.

"No word of this even to the wife of your bosom," he said in low, insinuating tones. "Strange times necessitate strange devices. If I can scare a hard-headed wight like yourself out of your wits with a Capucin's robe, I need not stand in mortal terror of the scatter-brained, eh?" With his ghostly apparel on one arm, the other on Isaye's, he added: —

"But no word, I say, except of the apparition — as many about *that* as you please. The truth is, my good friend, we have lighted upon ticklish times."

"So it seems," was the quiet reply.

"And unless I am very much mistaken, this Revolution we hear so much about will mean more than meets the eye. I, for one, intend to keep a whole skin as long as I can."

CHAPTER XII.

ECHOES OF CHARLOTTE.

SEVERAL days passed, and, naturally, without tidings of the trio. Raymond and his brothers were in reality as remote as if on mid-ocean. No letter-carriers existed throughout rural France. Rich folks, when in the country, paid especial messengers for fetching their letters from the nearest town, — the Barefoot they were called, — such rude service being performed by tatterdemalions; poor folks — for the most part unable to read or write — held no intercourse with the outer world whatever. If any absented themselves, no one learned of their doings till they came back.

Gillette and Airelle were busy with their herbal one morning when Elie surprised them. The family medicine chest is ever an important charge of country housewives. Exorcisms for maladies of the flesh had gone out of fashion; not so blood-letting. The barber-

surgeons were literally besieged on market days by sturdy peasants, paying five sous for what was most often prevention rather than cure. The fainter-hearted chose Gillette's milder treatment. As a rule, folks believed in the popular Bessin adage, —

> "Who seeks a doctor,
> Runs after his grave-digger."

On a hot attic floor, from May till October, Gillette's leaves and flowers lay a-drying: fragrant simplings from wood, field, and meadow to be assorted and labelled before winter set in. Pectoral flowers for coughs, mallows for sore throats, arnica for bruises, service-berries for colic, unguents, infusions, decoctions, — all were here, Gillette being reputed the best herbwoman in those parts, as good at physic and cataplasms as any nun provided with episcopal diploma.

Finding kitchen and outhouses deserted, Elie climbed the wooden stair. Both flower-sorters were on their knees. Gillette placidly pursued her task in spite of the interruption. Airelle dropped her handful of rosemary at Elie's first sentence.

"I have seen your Charlotte!" he said.

"He has seen her, — our own Charlotte!" Airelle repeated rapturously, wanting to hear everything in a breath. "Did you chat together? Oh, make haste and tell us all!"

Gillette, never for a moment neglecting her work, glanced at the eager girl, mutely reproachful.

"Charlotte is very dear to us; but your brothers are as our kinsfolk, and it is they who stand in mortal danger. Are they safe, — out of harm's way?" she asked, in agonized suspense.

"As far as I know. Oh, you may trust to Raymond for getting out of a scrape!" replied the young man; "but indeed I am hardly wiser than yourself, Mother Gillette. We parted company on the way. I had no inclination for pulling down images."

"Thank the Blessed Virgin, there is at least one God-fearing Avril of the three!" ejaculated Gillette; "but Raymond, Lambert," she added, "they have surely abstained from sacrilege; they are not numbered among the accused, doomed to the branding iron, the gallows, to —" The word "excommunication"

was on her lips. She stopped short, frightened at her own thoughts.

"They were but two out of ten thousand, and maybe, like myself, only lookers-on," Elie replied. "As I say, we lost sight of each other soon after starting. You shall hear what I saw at Caen."

Whilst Gillette's motherly heart was yearning for news of her lads, as she called them, her mind up to a certain point easy about Charlotte, Airelle could only think of her foster sister, — the dream-Charlotte of her present life. Almost a dream she appeared already, so enormous the gulf between them, so widely lay their destinies apart.

"As you both know," began the young man, at a sign from Gillette, joining them on the floor, lending a hand with the sorting, sifting, packing, "Raymond was off first, Lambert following him like a hare. I shouted and shouted, put fingers to mouth and hallooed again. There was no stopping them. As well try to stop the wind when it is blowing the chaff about before a storm! You see, Mother Gillette, you see, Airelle, the tocsin was ringing from every belfry for miles

round, — not a church bell throughout the Bessin but had been set a-going, — and the sound had got into their very blood, into mine too, into everybody's! We did not know why we were running. How should we? On we went, at every turn of the road falling in with others. Men bent as scythes hung downwards, women old enough to be Judith's mother, brave fellows, sound from head to foot as prize cattle, meek-faced mothers carrying babes, — the tocsin started them all, kept up their pace, made them forget weariness, hunger, and thirst."

"Holy Mother and the blessed saints help us all!" put in Gillette. "What means the tocsin but mutilations, scourgings, prison, death, the King's wrath, the King's dragoons?"

Elie laughed strangely. He, too, the dreamy, toward youngling of a few weeks back, was wholly transformed. Revolution had matured him, manhood being accompanied by defiance, self-assertion, precision.

"Say 'meant,' not 'means,' good mother," he said, exchanging glances with Airelle, — on every topic but one the pair understood each

other. "The King is absolute in France no longer. It is the National Assembly that now governs as the Parliament of free England. The tocsin — but let me go on. Forward we marched, — the halt and the valiant, the decently clad and the out-at-elbows, — our numbers increasing by the way. At Littry we were a thread, a mere rivulet; by the time we reached Crouoy the rivulet had become a stream; at Beaussey the stream had swollen to a river; where the high road branched off in the direction of Bayeux, the river, still growing fuller at every step, branched off too — "

Gillette, fairly carried away by the narrative, did, at last, rest from her work; Airelle's hands had long been idle; Elie desisted with the others. Still squatted on the ground, he leaned against the wall, confronting his listeners.

"All the way from Bayeux to Caen it was the same, — folks running from La Motte, from Norrey, from all directions — "

"Raymond and Lambert, they went on?" asked Gillette.

"No; we left them at Bayeux. They will

tell you what happened there; but don't be frightened, Mother Gillette. As far as I could learn, what the mob pulled down were the stone images of bishops and abbots who had cruelly treated the people; and it was the convents and monasteries folks fell foul of, not churches. They will tell you all about it, Raymond and Lambert, I mean—"

"Elie, are you your father's son?" Gillette said, with an expression of mild horror. "Do you suppose, if your brothers have committed sacrilege, my husband will ever permit them to cross this threshold? But go on."

Glad to turn to another subject, Elie continued:—

"Now, to tell you what I saw with my own eyes at Caen! Only to think that Charlotte was once under this very roof!"

"My nursling, my foster darling!" murmured Gillette, by anticipation, moved to proud tears; but Airelle, with passionate impatience, entreated silence.

"You have never visited the great city on the Orne, Mother Gillette. Airelle has, of course, told you what it is like. Never before, however, was Caen seen, never again will

any see it, as I did yesterday. Bare standing room in any street, no face among the crowd but fierce and wild. You see," he said, half apologetically, no less astonished than his listeners at the self-confidence, but a few hours old, "this multitude was not like the famine-stricken wretches who pillaged Rouen when I was a boy. Only some were here hollow-eyed, bare-ribbed, shoeless, tattered, like those who have besieged our own doors in years of famine. And the ragged and barefoot were not the fiercest. No, the men and women howling like maniacs were decently clad folks, housewives after your pattern, Mother Gillette; fathers respectable as my own—"

"What business had such there?" Gillette asked sternly. "Answer that question, Elie, lad."

Elie reflected for a moment. How could he make her understand, render the truth clear as day? In substance, in outline, he understood it himself; but to put subtle problems and knotty questions into language was a task beyond his powers. And the explanation would take too long.

"Good mother," he said, "do you think their business was really with cornfactors' stores and bakers' shops? Were any there in their hearts thirsting after pillage and bloodshed? Never believe it! What brought such crowds together, what made them rapacious and unruly was the Law, the Law that has allowed grain to be kept back whilst the people starved."

"And the convents, the sacred images?" asked Gillette, still out of countenance. The good woman looked ready to start up and flee, as if every word listened to made herself also guilty of sacrilege.

Again Elie paused for a moment. How far dared he speak out openly on these subjects, confide in this timid listener?

"It is not for me to say that there are bad priests as well as good, and that monasteries and images may mean robbing the poor as well as granaries and bakers' shops," he said, "but so it is. Has not my father, has not neighbour Isaye, again and again argued with Father Patrix on the injustice of taxing the like of us, leaving noble and clergy scot-free? But let me tell you of Charlotte."

"Yes, yes," Airelle exclaimed, "we can talk over the rest at supper. Let him go on, dear mother."

"As I was saying," continued the relater, "I cannot describe what I saw, I can only try to make you guess what it was like. The townsfolk then had all got about the Place St. Pierre, the great square itself was packed as close as cheeses for market, every street leading to it too full for a soul to move. One might have thought that all the Cotentin, all Normandy had come into the town; by the great church of Duke William, by château and moat, they streamed from the Bayeux road and all long the river, north, south, east, west, they came."

He turned to Gillette with a look of honest self-congratulation.

"Don't think that I have come back with a rope round my neck. Granaries were ransacked, demolished, fired, heads and ribs broken, more than one poor fellow done for in the fray, but without aiding or abetting of mine."

"The Blessed Virgin be praised," ejaculated Gillette.

"Truth to tell," Elie went on, "most of us were as helpless as sheep penned for the night, only just able to move an inch at a time. I found myself, how I hardly know, in the Place St. Pierre over against a fine house, one of the finest there, the façade of polished wood all sculptured, each gable having elaborate pinnacles and cornices. About this the crowd were yelling, hooting, throwing stones, as if every soul had just escaped out of a madhouse. 'The monopolizer, the monopolizer!' all shouted, and of course I knew what they meant. Here lived some farmer of taxes or wealthy corn-factor, who had withheld corn from the people, letting them starve for lucre's sake. The mad creatures around me now became veritable demons, come what come would, they were determined to have their man. Many had arms of a kind, hatchets, pickaxes, and spades, but these they did not want. The house over against St. Peter's Church might stand. They only wanted its owner. The street behind was barricaded by people, so that the poor wretch was caught in a trap; no rat made more secure. 'Unless he had already escaped?' growled some one at my

elbow. As I say, the prisoner must have been a proper bad fellow, otherwise there would not have been such thirst for his blood. Folks seemed ready to tear him to pieces. That I should ever say it of fellow-countrymen! — some stood by who glared like famished wolves in sight of the sheepfold."

His listeners held their breath. Charlotte was for the moment forgotten. With beating hearts they awaited the climax. Tears started to Elie's eyes; a glow of enthusiasm heightened his ruddy cheeks; he went on eagerly, hardly giving himself time to be clear.

"On a sudden the whole town — for the whole town indeed was there — became still as death. Craning my neck, — fortunately I am half a head taller than most, — I saw that a passage was being made through the crowd; folks pressed each other, backwards, forwards, on either side, so that there was just room for the way of one. Then a diabolical cheer burst forth." He put his hands to his ears, for an instant horror-stricken as his hearkeners.

"I hear it still. I shall hear it as long as I live. A torchbearer was how seen running between the two walls of people; he held up

his blazing pine shaft triumphantly, all huzzaing as he went. Not a drop of rain has fallen in the Cotentin since St. Jean; rivers and ponds are dry; that ancient timbered house and any one in it would burn as tinder put to the spark. You may easily imagine that the torchbearer's path was cleared in a twinkling; sooner than I can say, he reached the door; folks crowing and chuckling, you might have supposed some wench had gained the smock-race at a fair."

"We are lost, damned. May the saints intercede for us all!" ejaculated Gillette, crossing herself.

"Every neck was now craned like my own; people expected the trembling wretch to rush out as the last rat from a wheat-sack, being pitchforked on to the threshing-floor; he would surely prefer the halter to the spit, to roasting alive! The flambeau had reached the door when the casement on the balcony did slowly open, and we saw, we saw—"

Again generous emotion made the young man's eyes glisten and his cheeks tingle; anxious still more closely to share their own, he caught a hand of each.

"What seemed a heavenly vision, many indeed took it to be so; the women nearest to me fell a-weeping, and fingering their rosaries. The men uncovered their heads; many made the sign of the cross. The white-robed figure standing there, by gesture only imploring mercy, was that of a young girl, fair to look at as pictured virgins in attendance upon Mary. Silent she stood and firm as a rock. No word was needed. Her fellow-citizens might fire the place if they would, she would be their first victim. Mother Gillette, Airelle, it is true what I tell you; that girl was your Charlotte."

The trio sat with hands clasped and moved faces, all three overcome with delicious agitation.

"No harm came to her, then?" asked Gillette at last.

The young man broke into a derisive laugh.

"The crowd! You don't know what a giddy pate is a crowd, — one moment ready to do for St. Peter himself, the next blubbering like a scalded child. And mischief enough had been done already, Heaven knows, as you will hear by-and-by. But here comes neighbour Isaye. I must go over my story again."

CHAPTER XIII.

"WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON!"

REVOLUTION is a very Proteus, multiform as the sea-god of countless shapes. To some Revolution wore the august semblance of Liberty; to others, the hair-bristling image of Havoc; now visionaries acclaimed the herald of universal brotherhood; now traditionalists turned aghast from destroying angel. For the most part, throughout the length and breadth of France, the great movement touched men's hearts and homes; its real meaning was to be found there. European States might totter, dynasties fall, thunders of war echo far and wide. All the while, peace-loving country folks and citizens were asking themselves: "This Revolution of ours, what means it to ourselves, to our children, to our daily lives?"

Although Judith was clear-sighted enough to realize the general import of a Fourteenth of July and a Fourth of August, Revolution

implied for her psalm-singing, sermons; nothing more. Her neighbours would no longer be liable to imprisonment, even death without trial, no longer be arbitrarily taxed whilst priest and noble got off scot-free; they would no longer sweat unpaid on the King's high road, lodge, feed, and equip the King's militia, grow corn for the seigneur's pigeons, see their crops trampled under foot of the seigneur's huntsmen. The old Huguenot dairywoman had a kindly fellow-feeling for those absorbed in such considerations, for whom this stupendous year meant material solace only. She could enter into their feelings and sympathize with their sense of relief. Her own harvest was spiritual — inner existence changed, daily life in outward respects the same, but oh, how altered!

"Our girl has half promised Judith a holiday for church-going next Sunday," Gillette had said to Isaye tentatively. "What say you, husband? I fear the father will not approve."

Isaye uttered one of those homely oaths long since regarded as permissible by the pious. "Father Patrix has something else to

think about just now," he replied, "and Judith, as he well knows, was never one of us; no worse, that I know of, and perhaps no better for her heresies, but there they are."

"What if the townsfolk create a disturbance, and the poor soul gets a broken head?"

The peasant's shrewd countenance lighted up.

"Nothing would delight our Judith better; she ought to have been burnt at the stake."

"But if she does get knocked about in a fray, the sisters at the hospice would not take her in; being a Huguenot, she would be left to die in the street," urged Gillette, still timorous.

Again Isaye expressed himself roundly.

"We are not living a year ago. Times are changed in this France of ours. You forget that there are no longer any heretics. We are to have Protestant deputies, Jews in advocate's gown; black folks are now their own masters. Judith will take no harm."

"Our girl —" hesitated Gillette.

"I know what you would say. Airelle wished to hear this Protestant pastor. That is another matter," was the curt reply.

The matter dropped. Judith was accorded

a holiday, neither Isaye nor Gillette alluding to its object. Airelle staid at home. Never maiden more tremblingly robed herself for espousals than the old dairywoman for churchgoing that Sunday morning. In preparation for the event one Louis d'or of her little hoard had been expended on a pedlar's pack. Speckless, creaseless alike were high mob cap of white cambric, white cotton kerchief pinned across well-whaleboned bodice, brand new, many pleated black frieze skirt and stout carpet shoes. Judith's robing was, as usual, performed in her half-curtained niche. Now sitting up, now kneeling, she adjusted these new habiliments one by one, the sacredness of the occasion lending something like sanctity to each. With reverent care she first selected whitest shift, least darned stockings, shook out her new dress, folded her kerchief. All the while she was conscious of strangely agitating thoughts — thoughts with which this wonderful day had nothing to do. The past, her youth, her love-story, wifehood, motherhood, came back. She felt as one whom long imprisonment or mental darkness have temporarily shut away from life, who has been resuscitated from a living tomb.

Not only spiritual exaltation brightened her eyes and made her cheeks glow, every pulse throbbed with reawakened feeling and newly recovered sensibilities. She was no longer a hireling among strangers, but member of a long-scattered family, stray sheep reunited to parent fold. There was a village fête at the gates of Bayeux that day, and thus Judith obtained a spare seat in a neighbour's cart. It was not till she approached her destination that pulses quickened, and she seemed to leap into another personality. The old passive, automatic self was gone; the long-buried creature of passion and aspiration breathed again. With wide-open eyes her whole being quickened to new sympathies, she gazed around. Left behind now were the open country, straggling villages, and lofty churches with penthouse roofs. Bayeux rose from the level landscape, like all beautiful things, most beautiful in one particular, its romantic cathedral tower spike of rarest blossom upon blossom thrown up into the air, flower-head in stone outdoing its companions in themselves beautiful enough.

By châteaux and rich burghers' houses with large iron gateways and spacious walled-in gar-

dens, by crumbling ramparts and open pleasance, she jogged, being set down at the city gates. The bustle of the streets confused her, and giving a tattered lad a sou she begged him to lead her to the appointed place.

It was a small two-storied shop in a remote, almost suburban street, the site having been chosen on account of such isolation. The shutters of the ground floors were closed, and a written notice over the door ran as follows:

SERVICE OF THE REFORMED CHURCH,
AUTHORIZED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,
AT 10 OF THE CLOCK.
PASTOR, JEAN EUDELINE.

That was all. There was no mustering outside and writing to attract general; notice indeed, every precaution had apparently been taken to avoid publicity, and as it happened this especial day, one of local festivity. Already mingling with church bells came the sound of merry-go-round, showman's drum, fanfare, and fiddle. The entire population kept holiday.

But no sooner was the corridor entered than Judith found herself surrounded by friends, strangers the moment before, precious as kins-

folk now. Silvery-haired grandames, blooming maidens, wealthy merchants, threadbare artisans, interchanged hand-clasps, tears, kisses, fraternal greetings. Intensest joy prevailed, but mingled with how much sorrow!

"I have no mother; let me love you instead," said to Judith a meek-faced girl in black and speaking with foreign accent. She was one of the numerous exiles just returned to France, orphaned, rendered portionless, outlawed for her faith; love of country had yet proved too strong. All was forgotten and forgiven.

"And let me befriend you both," put in a portly citizen holding out a hand to each. He was one of the many rich merchants of Havre, who had purchased life and liberty by virtue of compromise; not denying, but not proclaiming his belief, he now felt humbled before these braver spirits.

"My boy and girl," murmured a young mother, bending over her ten and eight year old children, "ask yonder good woman to kiss you, she has perhaps no grandchildren of her own."

"Little ones, Heaven's blessings fall on

you," said an aged man with streaming tears; "I may not envy your parents, though my own valiant son perished on the King's galleys rather than perjure his soul; my fair young daughter, torn from us by the King's warrant, died of a broken heart in the convent."

"Their sufferings are at an end, our martyrs helped to hasten this happy day," added another, he too made desolate, outlawed, a bankrupt by the Revocation; "let us hallow their memories by hopefulness and thanksgiving!"

Amen rose to every lip, then with renewed eagerness, with smiles more inspiriting, tears more passionate, the questioning went on. Each would fain learn the other's history, give and receive the sympathy so long withheld, renew the sternly repressed ties of brotherhood. It was a piteous yet not inconsolable spectacle.

Well might the joy of the little congregation be damped by memories! Until the date of the Revocation, the Protestants of the Bessin had possessed churches in almost every village. Vainly had one of their pastors won from Louis XIV. the cynical compliment of being the most eloquent pleader in

his kingdom. The pathetic words of Pastor Dubosque were disregarded. One by one the churches of Trévières, Vaucelles, Geffosse fell under pickaxe and battering ram; the goods of the Protestants enriched the royal coffers, their children were shut up in convents, themselves martyrized in dungeons. Worse still, persecution was egged on by appeal to the lowest passions, the informer, as in corrupted Rome, receiving the wealth of his victim.

Beyond power of words had been the suffering, sobered now the joy. They wanted no earthly recompense, these simple, much-tried souls, nothing but what Revolution had just accorded, the right of conscience, the little all, that implies a soul!

"They pass in, our pastor, the elders of the church," whispered one; "let us take our places."

With heads bowed low and lips moving in silent prayer, all now entered the back room, doing duty as a temple. The arrangements showed the usual austerity of Protestant ritual. Above the improvised altar hung a small silver crucifix, whilst on the walls little tablets of black wood with white characters notified the

hymns and Scripture readings of the day. A white fringed napkin covered the sacramental plate.

Such an inauguration would have tried the self-restraint of any man, and Eudeline's face spoke of inner struggle. How could he rein in the natural triumph, the wild hopes, the far-reaching ambitions of the moment, how enchain his hearers to the plain Sabbath duty before them, the newly recovered privilege of prayer and praise?

But something beyond the preacher's earnestness, the democrat's zeal, was written on those strongly marked, heroic features. Revolution meant more to him than liberty of worship, spiritual brotherhood, a congenial career. Deeper feeling, exultation of intenser kind manifested themselves; a rugged, unflinching nature had been softened by passion. He thought of Airelle. He glanced round after the first silent devotion, the merest look telling him that she was not there. But the presence of her old serving-woman formed a bond between them. They should see each other elsewhere, be brought together, if not in the temple.

On either side of the pulpit sat laymen of years' standing, elders of the newly organized church, whose office it was to aid and counsel the pastor in matters alike spiritual and temporal, whose authority in some cases overrode his own. The congregation itself formed the choir, two amateur musicians with flute and hautboy helping imperfect memories. At first hearts were too full for singing. One voice failed, then another, and another. Eudeline, resolute always, raised a higher, and yet a higher note. His deep, rich bass drowned the low sobs of the women, the faltering notes of the men. Soon from the little congregation swelled forth a full stream of song, each voice superhumanly loud and expressive. Not twenty-five souls were present; a listener outside must have taken for granted twice the number. As yet Judith remained the calmest present. Once more, after half a lifetime, she joined in the psalmody of her people. Without perceptible tremor she listened to exhortation from the pulpit, heard the reading of Scripture, went through experiences alternately yearned for and dreaded. At one time she had said to herself that she should

never be able to bear it all; overjoy would stop the beating of her heart. But, instead, she felt unnaturally composed. Another and yet profounder feeling rendered these impressions faint by comparison. The thrill of religious fervour had been succeeded by personal emotion, — emotion vague, inexplicable, — not to be put into words. Again came the disquieting thought: was her mind giving way, had manifold excitement troubled her reason? From time to time she gazed at the pastor fixedly, then covered her eyes as one blinded by strong light.

"'Woman, behold thy Son!'"

Eudeline's text rang through the room with marvellous pathos and sonority. The words came as a surprise to every listener. All without doubt had anticipated some ringing note of triumph, some rapt strain of jubilation. Did not white robes, garlands, hallelujahs, befit such a moment rather than dust and ashes, pall and dirge?

The preacher seemed aware of these unspoken comments. In a few sentences he set himself right with his audience.

"'Woman, behold thy Son!' My brethren

and sisters, shall not the consideration of an immortal sorrow, a sorrow that spiritualized the world, a sorrow part human, part divine, best prepare us for our changed, our happier fortunes? Let us then turn from those pages of Scripture that at first sight would seem more appropriate to this day's celebration; let us forget the Song of Deborah, the vengeance of Judith and Esther, even the campaign of the great Maccabeus. We may now, indeed, with the Jews of old sing of 'light and gladness, of joy and honour.' More does His meek apostrophe teach and uplift us: 'Woman, behold thy Son!' alike the saddest, the sublimest words on record, reminding us as they do of the human in the Godlike, the Godlike in humanity, the suffering that may prove a beatitude."

"Good mother, you are surely feeling ill; sniff my smelling-salts," whispered the gentle girl speaking English-French. Judith put away the proffered bottle with only a gesture of thanks. She had not turned pale; her sunburnt complexion defied change of colour. It was the fixed, dazed stare, the rigid features, the quick-drawn breath that frightened her

companion. Throughout the entire service she had been battling with herself, trying to banish wild, unprofitable thoughts. Why, oh, why would they come, these heart-breaking illusions and agonized reminders?

In his pastoral robe — the black gown of the Calvinistic church with its wide, open sleeves — she no longer saw a stranger and chance-found minister, but the living image of her dead husband; as the moments wore on, she said to herself, her own, long-lost son. Every attitude, every pose strengthened the impression. Every look, every utterance increased the sense of reality. Before the service was over she had ceased to doubt. The Jean Eudeline in yonder pulpit was the Jean Eudeline torn from her arms by royal warrant, given out for dead half a lifetime ago. There was no line of his features, no glance to which she could not now swear. He was his father's second self, her first-born, her man-child; not like Hannah's, brought forth in pride and rejoicing, but in dread and tears. Here none could deceive. The mother's instinct was infallible.

Mechanically, and without the slightest show

of devotional rapture, she followed the older members to the communion table. Whilst the rest wept tears of thankfulness, as standing in a semi-circle, they sipped from the mystic chalice and broke the bread of brotherhood, her mind was elsewhere. With devouring looks she followed the pastor, noting the hands, — ever so full of character, — the strong, muscular wrists; noting, also, the shape and embossing of cup and paten, — both familiar objects. Thirty and odd years before, from these very vessels she had received the consecrated bread and wine, her husband — this man's father — being the celebrant.

According to custom, Eudeline, when handing symbolic draught and morsel, uttered words of soothing or encouragement, — some scriptural phrase suited to the recipient and the occasion. Was he thinking of the dairywoman's story? Did he seek to console her by recalling a mother yet more bereaved, — a son, immortal, yet a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Was he promising to fill the place of her long lost one? To be not only her pastor but her support? In

soft, almost tender tones, gently pressing her hard toil-worn fingers he murmured, —

"Woman, behold thy son!"

Then, at last, Judith's stoicism gave way; unable any longer to keep back conviction and to withhold her secret, routine and solemn occasion overcome by natural feeling, she fell back from the rest. A voice, moving as any ever heard within sacred walls, rang through the building. A cry of measureless love and appeal cut short the solemn ceremonial and paralyzed all present.

"Dost thou not know me, my son?" she wailed. "I am in truth thy father's wedded wife, thy own mother!"

CHAPTER XIV.

ANATHEMA.

THAT Sunday morning Airelle set out for mass in extraordinary spirits. She felt as if she trod on air, as one who has just experienced supreme deliverance. To-day, Revolution meant something intensely personal. For the time being, the future of France, even Charlotte, were lost sight of; she could only dwell on her newly recovered liberty, revel in a sense of boundless, unimagined independence. Isaye had merely said to her, before setting out, —

"Your mother and I have told neighbour Avril our minds about Raymond. Elie will suit us well as a son-in-law. But you can both wait."

Marriages in humble life, not less than among noblesse and the plutocracy, were often matters of mere arrangement. Did these homely yet by no means coarse peasant folks

realize their daughter's self-congratulation? Could they compare this delicate-minded girl with the turbulent Raymond, and not enter into her feelings? Be this as it may, they had decided the question for once and for all. No image-breaker, no sacrilegist, should become one of themselves. Times were gone by when any who so much as slighted a holy relic, ignored a crucifix, insulted a priest, were torn by red-hot pincers, cruelly maimed, made to die by inches. Raymond and his brother would, most likely, escape unpunished, their lawlessness being shared by multitudes. In the eyes of the world, the little world of home, the instigator and leader was forever disgraced. Those who had loved him from childhood must not here too easily forgive.

As Airelle opened her missal, she blushed for her own egotism. She ought to be thinking of others, sorrowing for the stricken parent, the erring sons, playmates of her youth. She could realize nothing but this newly regained freedom. Raymond's wild, ungovernable animal nature was not destined to spoil her life; henceforth she belonged to herself and her dreams.

In former days, the seigneur and his family had received almost royal honours at church. But the hours of mass did not now depend on mandate from the château, service no longer waited the appearance of the seigneurial arrival; if marquis and marquise absented themselves, valet and lady's maid seated in their place did not nowadays enjoy vicarious privilege, a separate wafting of incense, a separate stoup of holy water, first offering of consecrated bread. Here, as elsewhere, the unoccupied stalls in the choir, with their blazonry and monumental brasses represented empty splendour, vanished prestige. Another circumstance betokened gradual change. The village patriarch could now claim his ancestral seat.

For centuries the nave, cut off from choir by road screen and altar rails, had belonged to the people. On the inhabitants rested the charge of reparation and keeping in order; hence, perhaps, the sales, meetings, and festivals held there in former days. But wooden benches by degrees filled the empty space, and members of a household sat together. Regular church-goers took the same place all the year round. Only late comers, stragglers, and

vagrants remained standing under the belfry tower. The little congregation had mustered by twos and threes, the sacristan lighted up the altar, and Father Patrix, bending low, began the service.

"In nomine Patris, Filii, et Spiritûs Sancti, amen, introibo ad altare Dei."

The words were hardly out of his lips when a murmur was heard from one end of the church to the other; a convulsive movement thrilled the little assembly.

"Raymond! it is Raymond!" passed from mouth to mouth.

Eudette, giggling, rocking herself to and fro from sheer excitement, was with difficulty frowned into decorum by her employers. Airelle covered her face with her hands. Avril and his youngest son sat bolt upright, not daring to glance at their prodigal.

The day was of usual Norman brilliance. That opening of the church door had let in a vista of dazzling blue sky, and with it a momentary glimpse of the intruder; the heavy panel swung back slowly; all had time to see Raymond's face. None would ever forget a certain expression they discerned on those

well-known features. Only a week ago Raymond had been one of themselves, no more dreaded than in years gone by. The events of a day had changed the harum-scarum, the scapegrace, the would-be devil-me-care, into a desperado. There was something in the fiercely brilliant complexion, the black hair and eyes, the very beauty hitherto winning universal indulgence, that made his kinsfolk and neighbours shrink from him to-day.

Father Patrix, turning towards the congregation, noted alike the prevailing dismay and its cause. Priest and impenitent looked hard at each other, the first saying plainly as could any words: Dare you thus to pollute these sacred precincts? the other's response being of mute, sullen defiance. Hard indeed was it to decide who was the more anguish-stricken and ashamed, confessor or his flock. One feeling moved the entire assemblage, that of intense, painful shame. Raymond's lapse seemed their own. All longed to pity and pardon him, but he must first show contrition, humble himself, and receive absolution.

The priest's affliction they felt as a personal matter. Was not the young man's

presence a slight on his holy office, an affront to the church itself? Revolution, — that is to say, the supersession of bad laws by good, the downfall of privilege, — they were ready to acclaim, but not image-breaking or defilement of the altar.

Gillette's pious nature had sustained a severe shock, at the same time her motherly heart yearned towards her favourite. Anxious to check his bravado, and if possible prevent further offence, she whispered into Isaye's ear: "Neighbour Avril seems turned to stone. Do you go and beg Raymond to leave the church."

Isaye did not stir. He had his own opinions on everything, and it seemed to him that the culprit was best there. Father Patrix might safely be left to deal with him. He would, perhaps, openly admonish from the pulpit. The monotonous, unaccompanied service went on, the little church as yet boasting of no organ. More rapidly than usual the curé got over prayers and litanies, psalms and gospel, then glancing sternly at the erect, unabashed figure under the gallery, he climbed the pulpit stairs.

The sermon was always preceded by a long

list of notices gabbled over as fast as tongue could go, for the first, second, or third time banns of marriage were published, on such and such a day mass would be said for the soul of some deceased parishioner, or extra service would be held in honour of saint or martyr. Then followed temporal matters, the faithful were reminded that the roof of the presbytery needed repair, that the sacristan had no shoes to his feet, and that parents who sent their children to the poor man for instruction, must send at least a sou with them.

Formerly offences had been openly rebuked in church, and after sternest fashion. From village pulpits would be thundered forth those episcopal monitions that made even the scoffer tremble. Such measures belonged to the past. Abuse of the dreaded formula had brought about its suppression. Not the oldest present could remember the hearing of a monitory, whilst mere matter of legend was that more terrible sentence still, the blood-curdling, the awful anathema!

To-day an ominous pause followed the last parochial notice. Father Patrix turned a shade redder, cleared his throat, glanced sig-

nificantly at the tall figure under the gallery, and began: —

"In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritûs Sancti, amen. Seeing that one, Raymond Avril, of this parish, hath been guilty of desecration, I hereby declare him cut off from the Holy Church, expelled from the congregation of Christian men —"

The unexpectedness of the curé's action took every one's breath away. Had the Bishop himself suddenly appeared in his place, folks could not have been more stupefied, frozen into stonier silence. None ventured to glance at his nearest neighbour. All eyes were fixed on Father Patrix. For the first time in her life, Eudette, the giggler, looked really humanly intelligent, awe had imparted something like a soul.

Every eye was fixed on the priest, but most of all did his initiative affect himself. This easy-going father, boon companion of the humblest, hail-fellow of the least strait-laced, was suddenly endowed with august prestige, lifted into a sphere of loftiest prerogative. The best-natured face in the world was transformed, arrogance and triumph reigning where

before had been almost a crushing sense of insufficiency.

"Let him be unto ye, in the words of Scripture, 'as a heathen and a publican.'"

With each clause given out, the general dismay increased.

His hearers were not dreaming, then? One of themselves, darling and playmate of days gone by, friend and neighbour of riper years, was classed with the heretic and the blasphemer, deprived of the holy sacraments, privileges of baptism, under the ban of excommunication.

"Furthermore," the priest went on, "apostolic canons forbid any one to pray in the same house with him; no Christian woman must marry him, and unless—"

Here Father Patrix spoke in a higher, more impressive key.

"Unless he speedily come to a better mind, and make satisfaction to us, he will be confounded with eternal malediction and condemned with perpetual anathema, deprived of the blessed sacraments and Christian burial, obtaining no part with God and the saints hereafter, having his portion with Korah, Da-

than, and Abiram, with Ananias and Sapphira, Pilate and Judas. In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritûs Sancti, amen."

The long, many-claused formula was barely at an end when once more the heavy door swung on its hinges and a dazzling vista of blue sky was seen; once more a lowering, superbly handsome face and herculean figure stood out against the light.

Raymond did not move slowly or stealthily, as one who shuns public scrutiny. With hand on the panel, he waited an instant, deliberately looking round. A glance sufficed for his purpose. The priest was still magisterial here, his authority paramount. The entire congregation remained terror-stricken, stone still. It was as if every soul present had heard his own death-warrant. Defiant as before, only passion and vindictiveness written on his features, Raymond let go the door; it closed noiselessly; again the church was in semi-twilight.

Hitherto Father Patrix had been unwontedly precise and deliberate. It was not like him to do anything unusual, much less take an extreme course, without fluster and trepidation. No sooner was the occurrence over

than he began to marvel at his own daring and to realize what he had done. Pallor succeeded the hot flush of the moment before. His voice erewhile metallic in its piercingness, became almost inaudible as he gabbled through the sermon. Then, still indecorously quick and jerky, he made the best of his way to the altar, got over the remaining ritual with all possible expeditiousness and not once looking round slipped into the sacristy.

On other days people began to chat ere quitting the church. Now one and all moved forward in silence.

The little congregation had broken up into twos and threes under the trees, when Gillette missed Avril. The old man naturally shrank from pity and comment.

"Go inside and fetch our neighbour," she said to her husband. "Let him and Elie return with us. There is soup enough for all."

Isaye needed no second bidding. Elie was not to be found; but there in the empty church, never having quitted his place, sat the patriarch.

"Avril, neighbour," said Isaye softly, approaching from behind.

The rigid figure did not stir. With head bent low, the long white hair making a light in the gloom, Avril still seemed to listen, to hear the dread anathema.

"Come, neighbour," cried the other, affecting cheeriness. "Why be so cast down? The women are waiting for you. Gillette and my girl—"

From the first, Isaye's tact had told him that this fixedness meant no mere drowse, rather, the stupor of despair. He now realized that it meant something more. Avril's keen, bright glance was gone; the firm, finely modelled features were relaxed; hale, hearty old age had changed to senility. The other's friendly slap of the shoulder made him look up, but as one whose senses are bewildered. Glancing round, he whispered,—

"Don't let his poor mother know."

"His mother—" began Isaye, then stopped short, his own eyes brimming over.

Jeanne Avril had been laid in the churchyard ten years and more! Only a week ago, husband and sons had said mass for her soul. Never a Sunday but the Virgin and her patron saint were invoked on her behalf.

Trying to soothe him by the way, supporting, rather carrying him, he got the old man out of doors; then beckoned Elie.

"Let us take your father home, he is not well," he said, making signs to the rest that all could understand.

CHAPTER XV.

A BROWNIE'S LOVE.

THERE is a certain voluptuousness in profound emotion as in passions the most base. What was Judith's disappointment on returning home to find the farmhouse deserted, only Eudette and the dogs keeping watch, none to whom she could unbosom herself? She longed to pour out her heartful. Airelle's sympathy she was sure of; Gillette and Isaye might listen incredulously at first, but they would hear her to the end, go curiously into the matter, if possible, help to clear it up.

On the homeward journey she had anticipated the effect of her story, Airelle's smiles and tears, Gillette's thrill of mutually shared motherhood, Isaye's calm, judicial enquiries. All these would console her for the deeper, sweeter interest to come: as yet unawakened feeling on the part of Eudeline, tenderness of son for long-lost mother.

"My poor, good woman," the pastor had said, not a trace of disturbance, much less of recognition in voice or look, "rest assured that your doubts shall soon be set at rest. If indeed matters stand as you believe, you will never find me wanting in filial duty. But I cannot believe it. I must regard your convictions as chimera."

And some one in the little assembly had whispered, each syllable reaching her:—

"The much-tried soul! To-day's excitement has disordered her reason."

Alike minister and fellow-worshipper treated her with the utmost pitifulness and forbearance. One housewife took her home and made her partake of the family board; another harnessed horse to calèche and drove her half-way back to the Delle; all listened, questioned, counselled. She could see plainly enough that all remained unconvinced. No one for an instant supposed that Eudeline was really her child. Strange resemblance, extraordinary coincidence might point to such a conclusion. Where was the proof?

His own words, so calm, so passionless, mortified as those of bitterest rebuke. She

would not impute unworthy motives to him; she refused to accuse him of proud shrinking. It was only natural that he should resent her conduct, — disturbance of divine service, the minister put to confusion in the sight of his congregation and at the very altar.

"Heaven made us mothers; God will forgive!" she murmured, for the moment envying Gillette her mother-God, her Mary to pray to. Colder creeds, human sympathies, will and self-control seemed wholly inadequate. She was, as it were, once more in travail. Once more the pangs of bringing forth, the ecstasy of imminent motherhood were hers, but in utter isolation, none by to sustain her courage, share her exultation!

Eudette was squatted on the doorstep as she approached, at the sound of footsteps hiding something in her apron.

"Master and mistress are with Father Avril; and Airelle, too. The old man has had a fit," said the strange girl sullenly.

A feeling of awe prevented her from telling more. What had happened at church Judith might learn from others; she was not going to gossip about Raymond's excommunication.

"If I were you I should be off as well," added the giggler, with an odd expression, still holding her folded apron.

Judith shook her head and turned away. The pair held no more intercourse than that of common labour and a common board.

When at last the others returned Judith felt a yet more crushing sense of desolation. Her own pent-up emotions and working features were unnoticed. Not a question was put concerning her long-looked-for Sunday, the first holiday of half a lifetime! Airelle seemed on the point of speaking, then checked herself as if afraid of vexing her parents; and all three looked so grief-stricken that for a moment Judith forgot her own weight of unspoken, almost unbearable joy.

"The old man is not dead?" she asked, as they sat down to table.

"Would that he had died when sick of the fever years ago!" Isaye replied, as he threw her a huge piece of coarse bread. "But you are not of the religion; you cannot understand."

The peasant had been taught that only one religion existed, — his own. The rest were heathenish superstitions.

Gillette paused from her ladling; her strong, toil-worn hand trembled.

"Let me serve the soup, mother," Airelle said. "Do you sit down, and eat."

"Judith knows, as well as we do, what Raymond's errand was at Bayeux; and she knows how image-breakers used to be punished," Gillette replied, trying to swallow a morsel of bread.

"But there are no such horrible punishments now," put in Airelle. "The National Assembly has abolished mutilation, branding, torture —"

"The law cannot abolish sacrilege," Gillette said, "nor the Church from putting those guilty of it under the ban —"

Airelle hesitated, glanced at her father, then, taking courage, made answer, —

"Are you quite sure that Father Patrix has authority to do this? What if he has exceeded his powers?"

Isaye's honest face darkened.

"Suppose neighbour Avril were rich, had artful advocates to plead his cause, could take proceedings against his confessor in the Rouen Parliament — what am I thinking of

— in one of the new courts of law, would that alter Raymond's offence?"

"But think, father," urged Airelle. "Reflect for a moment, if Father Patrix had no right to read that sentence—"

Isaye seemed on the point of making a sharp rebuke, then paused; some thought had evidently struck him. Airelle pursued her advantage.

"Could Raymond be put on his former footing, I believe our neighbour would recover."

"Our girl is right there," Gillette almost groaned. "Not to be admitted to the blessed sacraments, prohibited from marriage in the Church, baptism withheld from his children, — these are the things that weigh on the old man's mind, that well-nigh robbed him of his wits. Oh, Raymond, Raymond!"

She wept quietly, taking a morsel of bread or spoonful of garlic soup between her sobs. Peasant folk cannot afford to fast for grief, the calls on sinew and muscle are too imperative. All five ate and drank, although their minds were burdened.

Nor can toilers afield keep anxious vigil.

They must drowse, holding off care and inner debate for the morrow. Heavy breathing throughout the house soon announced worn-out sleepers. Only Eudette, the brownie, the brainless, lay open-lidded.

Her attic, or rather the granary used as a bedchamber, was dark; and she dared not strike her flints. Long custom had given a cat-like sureness of movement and sense of locality. She could feel her way anywhere, indoors or out.

The church clock, sole timepiece in the village, chimed the hours, — ten, eleven, midnight. From time to time the uncouth creature roused herself with an effort, shook off sleep, so welcomed at other times, sat upright in her bed, peered, listened. The intensest hour of the night had now come; an hour or two later, and the deep purple heavens would lighten, cock-crowing break the stillness, shepherd and husbandman be abroad.

Dressing herself noiselessly and tying a large cotton kerchief about her head, she put one foot on the floor after the other, peering and listening anew. Then, holding wooden shoes and small bundle, feeling her way cau-

tiously, she crept to the farther end of the loft and down the crazy stair. She must pass the kitchen to let herself out, but had framed a pretext. Should master or mistress wake up, Judith raise an alarm, two or three words would allay suspicion. She need only hint 'at furtive steps outside, prowlers and pilferers who had cunningly silenced the dogs. No one so much as turned on the pillow. The day had been too long and too wearing for broken rest. Eudette now very deftly raised the bolt of the kitchen door, closed it after her, and passed out.

Such an intrusion was not likely to arouse Pyrame and his fellows. There would often be sick cows requiring care, the lambing season, and other occasions for nocturnal vigilance. A low whine of pleasure and recognition was all the notice taken of Eudette's presence.

With heart beating rapidly, and cheeks burning despite the cool midnight breeze, the half-witted girl hurried out of the farm-yard and along a narrow cart-track dividing sweeps of pasture. Here the hedges were high and tangled, tall flowering grasses covered the banks, overarching apple trees made deep

shadow. No better place could be chosen for lovers' tryst.

At the farther end something flickered. Eudette uttered a low cry and the light moved towards her. Giggling as was her wont, yet with a change of voice and manner that Raymond recognized at once, she hastened forward.

"Take all I have," she said, as she spoke forcing something into his hands.

The young man set down his lantern and fingered the little bundle curiously. In an old cotton apron was money: crown-pieces, piastres, — still current in Normandy, — sous, deniers; evidently her little hoard, the savings destined as a dowry.

"Is this what you wanted to see me for?"

The query was made with brutal frankness, a contemptuous smile lighting up his dark features.

Still chuckling and tittering, as yet quite unable to realize what was passing in the other's mind, she put her own hand to the treasure.

"There are three louis d'or, — just feel them!" she said proudly, "five crown-pieces,

three piastres, eleven livres, besides sous and deniers — "

"Well, and what is that to me, my good girl?" cried Raymond, still supremely contemptuous, and with evident mortification. Truth to tell, he had awaited token of different kind. When, after mass, Eudette contrived to waylay him and appoint this interview, he regarded her as Airelle's emissary.

The poor apprentice, moreover, the farmhouse drudge, belonged to one social category; Raymond Avril, eldest son of a small farmer, heir of farmhouse, stock, and land, to quite another. The gulf between peasant and bourgeois was not deeper than that between the humble well-to-do and the pariah.

Again Eudette giggled. The pair were alone; Raymond's princely face was so near that their cheeks almost touched. Somehow or other, despite the first real agitation of her life, she contrived to speak clearly and to the point.

"Folks say that you will become a beggar, be driven from door to door," she gasped out, "because you are an excommunicate, you know — " In quite another tone, in low, per-

suasive whisper she added: "Take my money, — every denier of it is at your service, — and give me, by way of exchange, a kiss, just a kiss — "

Raymond muttered to himself, as if hearing the wanderings of delirium or drunkenness.

"The giddy pate! the scatterbrain! I take her money, forsooth," she heard him ejaculate with a broad oath. "Court the like of her — I'd be gibbeted first!"

Not a syllable she had herself uttered but stung, galled, roused a demon within. Raymond's unbridled nature was not wanting in coarseness; the very pathos and appeal of the girl's overtures rendered her repulsive in his eyes.

"Tut, tut, tut," he said, roughly putting back her little bundle. "I can do without your money, my girl, and you must do without my palaver. But it is to be had for the asking elsewhere, — try your luck again."

Eudette, foolish as she was, could not weep; she stood still looking at him with a hopeless, helpless, wondering expression, much as some unoffending animal tortured for torture's sake.

Speech failed her, tongue and lips refused to do their office.

Before she had time to recover herself he was gone. His low, unconcerned whistling reached her from the farther end of the lane. Even then she did not weep. Intense ashamedness was mingled with a crushing sense of desolation. For the first time she realized what it was to belong to her own sex, yet have no part or lot in its joy and triumph.

Easy enough to divine how little, can the wisest declare how much, of true womanhood may exist in the pitilessly undowered? This poor Eudette understood the kind of self-reproach only women know, the life-long sitting in ashes following contemplated lapse. Could the chastest, the saintliest reach higher level?

CHAPTER XVI.

"NOT ONLY THE PRIEST — BUT THE MAN!"

How could Judith make good her claim, establish beyond question the fact of motherhood?

Nothing had hitherto been more difficult than for Protestants to obtain recognition of citizenship, namely, attested birth, wedlock, and death. As heretics, they forfeited these privileges after the Revocation, being then put on the footing of idiots, criminals, and slaves. The only title to civil existence in France was the ecclesiastical one, that of orthodoxy. It was the priest alone who had authority to baptize, unite in marriage, commit to earth, the priest who kept the parish register. So long as Protestant communities had contrived to hold together in spite of persecution, every child obtained its sponsors, every bride and bridegroom their witnesses, every burial a certificate.

When the monstrous edicts of Louis XV. completed the work of his forerunner, when civil rights were made to depend upon abjuration, the pious often renounced such a privilege; their wives remained unlawful, their children were regarded as illegitimate, their beloved ones lay in unconsecrated ground. But conscience remained clear, none had perjured his soul.

Judith's case was one of peculiar difficulty and hardship. Widowed, ruined, made homeless upwards of thirty years before; kith and kin long scattered beyond sea, how was a poor old serving-woman to contest the validity of royal and ecclesiastical documents? With many another offspring of Protestant parents, her boy had been kidnapped by the King's warrant, surreptitiously carried off and placed in a Catholic orphanage; his mother at the time sick abed, seized with the throes of premature bringing forth. A few months later and the certificate of the child's death was handed to her, such bereavement having terrible consolation. The child would not live to revile his parents' faith, and to abhor the sacred names of father and mother!

"Such then is the good woman's story," said Eudeline to his little audience at the farm; "you shall now in the fewest possible words learn my own. True that I bear the name of Judith's husband and child, true that I am an orphan and of Huguenot parentage. But the King's sign manual, the priest's attestation must be accepted in default of weightier proof; according to these, the Jean Eudeline torn from his parents by royal order is dead, the Jean Eudeline who stands before you has no living kith or kin and comes from quite another stock."

"The Eudelines of these parts were ever mostly peasants, fisher-folk, or pastors, and you are a gentleman's son, I see that," Isaye replied. "Judith, poor soul, is dreaming, 'tis as plain as day."

The pastor glanced at Airelle with just a tinge of colour in his pale cheeks.

"I have had delicate bringing up. In England careers far more attractive than that of the pastorate were open to me. Yet I felt myself strangely drawn, I may say impelled, towards the sacred calling. My parents, as I have every reason to believe, were noble, of once

titled Huguenot family from the south. If anything could shake that belief, could incline me to the good woman's state, it is the feeling I speak of, the yearning for France, for fellowship with my own people, for a ministry among them. But this is fanciful—"

He broke off, then went on quickly and evenly, his brief, business-like tones contrasting with the movingness of his theme.

"In the exodus that followed the monstrous edicts of the late reign, many Protestant children were smuggled across the sea, their parents remaining behind. Some simulated abjuration, forced to choose between such a step and beggary, others were let alone, purchasing immunity by dint of bribes and good services. I was among the number of those youthful exiles, my father and mother dying ere I could lisp their names, my boyhood carefully guarded by English friends and fellow-worshippers. Doubtless, in the perils and agitation of that awful time, very strange complications may have arisen. As you are probably aware, French Protestants, when thus driven from their country, often entirely changed or modified their patronymic. Quite

certain it is, that some knit by closest ties, and bearing the same name, have entirely lost sight of each other. More than one Huguenot family has not only been thus scattered, but dismembered for once and for all. My own case seems simple enough."

"You have your papers, sir?" asked Isaye.

Events moved rapidly, and with them the mind of the peasant. This well-spoken stranger, untonsured, wearing civilian's garb, yet calling himself a minister of religion, was so treated, even so regarded by the worthy Norman farmer. There was no longer any timorousness on Gillette's part. A Protestant pastor had become a fellow-countryman, a citizen.

"Proof positive, or what I believe to be proof positive, of my own identity," replied Eudeline. "Meantime, I have taken down from Judith's lips sundry names and dates that may further my enquiries. In the course of a week or so I shall visit Havre; if necessary, cross over to England and do my best to settle the matter."

Hitherto the speaker had showed no trace of emotion. He had spoken with the calm-

ness of one discussing an affair in no degree concerning himself. With quite a different voice, with altered and softer manner, he added: —

"You say that you have nothing to tell me of Judith's history except that you hired her into your service at a fair, according to custom, upwards of thirty years ago. That she is my mother I cannot for a moment believe; none the less, do I thank you for your goodness to a desolate woman, in the eyes of the law, moreover, an outlaw, an accursed one."

Gillette's eyes moistened.

"We never had a better dairywoman," she said. "Many a lazy lie-abed has she put to shame, many a glutton and slattern, with her sparing, tidy ways."

"Aye, wife, you may well say that," added Isaye, "and seemly in her speech, too; no language unfit for my daughter to hear, no wanton stories o' winter nights."

A strange thought seemed to strike his visitor. Eudeline glanced from Isaye to Airelle, a look of exultation, even ecstasy, lighted up his face as he, rising to take leave, replied, —

"Judith Eudeline shall then be here the

perpetual advocate of my people and myself. You will think kindlier of all Protestants for her sake."

"Nay, I have never thought ill of them," Isaye made answer, "but we must abide by the law."

"Happily all this has changed, and many other things are changing in France; let us hope for the better also."

"The saints grant that it may be so, sir!" Gillette said, crossing herself piously. "Farewell, and good fortune follow you. My daughter, see the pastor safely through the first meadow. We have a tetchy cow," she added explanatorily, "apt to run at strangers, but with Airelle you run no risk."

Airelle's first impulse was to draw back. Quickly recovering herself, she tied a white cotton handkerchief over her head to keep off the sun, took up a stout stick, and the pair set forth.

"Our animals are not vicious, but excessively timid," she began in the clear, correct French learned with Charlotte, "and very discerning, too. A dozen peasants, never seen before, they would pass by unnoticed. Yet,

look! already they stand still, eyeing your black frock coat suspiciously."

He smiled and made absent reply; his thoughts were evidently elsewhere.

The day was of usual resplendence; but as August differs from July, so does September from August. Light clouds just tinted with bluish-gray floated across the intense blue sky; the dazzling pasturage stirred with a cool breeze. Far away a copperish flash through the trees betokened some milkmaid riding afield, the swift metallic gleam contrasting with the immobility around. Isaye's cows, having looked up for a moment, lapsed into passiveness. Not a soul was to be seen; only sweep upon sweep of sunlit grass and distant herds, standing out solidly as masses of red and white carnelian against the burning blue.

"That is our Judith yonder, but I think you said you would rather not meet her to-day," Airelle said, this time rousing her companion.

Eudeline started. An expression of pain came into his face, followed by a little sigh of relief. What sad things he had to say but how sweet the telling!

"If I could only respond to the poor woman's yearning, for a single second feel the instinctive clinging of a son! There is something quite out of the ordinary in this old peasant, a dignity of bearing that would do honour to any, an endearing uprightness and benevolence. Yet — you can surely understand me, for you also have been delicately reared — I shrink from the thought that she is my mother! Such a conviction would fall upon me as a mortal blow."

"I understand," Airelle replied very sorrowfully. "You have received the education of a gentleman; you will henceforth move in a very different sphere from her own. Between Judith and yourself the gulf is wide."

She was thinking of the lot probably in store for herself, — that, too, perhaps, of loneliness and misconception, closest ties meaning chains that galled.

"I ought to blush for the sentiment uttered just now," he went on; "but even a Protestant pastor, outlaw of yesterday, may have ambitions, — honourable, yet not wholly free from the tincture of worldliness. We pastors have hitherto been nothing, but henceforth can par-

donably aspire to play a part. How strangely does fate, destiny, chance — call it what we will — seem to mock us in the most critical moments! As a minister of religion I ought to say, how are our very aspirations made to look retributive! How it pleases the Power above to try us! You heard the remark I dropped to your parents just now. From my childhood upwards I was drawn, I may even say magnetized, towards the ministry — "

In his eagerness he stopped short, confronting her, demanding close attention.

"That inexplicable, irresistible movement within, none encouraging me, none even approving my choice, is perhaps not only destined to humble my pride, frustrate my ambition, but to wrench me from life completely as cloistered monk. Judith's son must perforce content himself with the lowliest career. Eudeline the pastor, though free to love and marry as any other, must renounce love and marriage, because, because — "

He saw that he was understood, — no further need of words; the most passionate utterances could not make his meaning clearer. Airelle had turned away her face to hide her tears.

"This Revolution of ours!" he added, laughing bitterly. "It cannot work every miracle. In the eyes of your good parents I remain what I was a year ago. I must not aspire to their daughter's hand. But you, Airelle, I see it, I know it, in me you recognize not only the priest — but the man!"

For answer she put her hand in his, but the strong, nervous, well-shaped fingers were cold; there was no warmth of hope in the clasp, rather the sympathetic touch of despair.

"So far, at least, I am free," she begun, then stopped short, as if frightened at her own words. For a moment she remained with face half hid. Turning suddenly, mustering all her courage, she got out the rest.

"None can force my heart. Never let your own accuse me of perjury there."

"They will wed you with some peasant, no matter with whom, so long as he is not a Huguenot," Eudeline replied bitterly.

Airelle uttered a little cry of impatience. Did anything much matter? her face said. Yet as she turned to say farewell, the look of submissive endurance vanished. In its place came the rapture of perfect understanding.

"Whatever happens," she said, very gently and gravely, "remember how much I owe you—"

Her face told the rest. Does not a woman owe her little all to the man who chooses, adores her,—one out of millions?

"You and Charlotte," she added; "you two have made my life. The rest does not signify."

He laughed aloud.

"You owe me something?" he cried, holding her hands in his own, meeting her candid yet passionate glance. "No word more, or my heart will break—but not of sorrow!"

They had now reached the farther end of the meadow, and for a moment lingered—just to be in sight of each other, that was all. Then with heightened colour and the shyness born of entire confidence, Airelle brought out a thick, many-folded, wafered letter.

"See that my Charlotte has this. I can trust you with it, I know," she said, in a half whisper.

Then, never once looking back, she hastened away, and Eudeline with light step took the direction of the town.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST SACRIFICE.

THERE is nothing so impressive in rural France as the little procession suddenly called out to death-beds, priest and acolyte hastening to shrive the dying. Encountered alike in crowded market-place or solitary by-road, in July blaze or wintry snows, invested with no cathedral pomp, shorn of all but tawdry display, this sight arrests the worldling, wins a paternoster from the careless. The sacred emblem glittering aloft, the moved aspect of shrift-father and choristers, the litanies dismally chanted as they go, lose neither solemnity nor significance because of frequent occurrence. Death has made its voice heard. Amid their bustle, griefs, delights, men are once more reminded of the inevitable.

In country places the administration of extreme unction is a public event. At sound of warning bell and monotonous chant, at sight

of the Saint Esprit, and flaming candles, the ploughman leaves his furrow, the thresher drops his flail, the housewife her distaff, — all flock to the house of affliction, there to weep and pray in company, take leave of departing neighbour, console his kindred. A common emotion makes of the scattered villagers one family.

Avril was ever a favourite, and recent misfortunes had endeared him to his fellow-toilers. No sooner did his condition get noised abroad than young and old hastened to his bedside. As Gillette welcomed them the same question rose to every lip.

"Raymond — has Raymond come back?"

Each received by way of reply a tearful but resigned shake of the head. To this pious peasant woman, piled-up sorrows seemed only natural — heritage alike of the virtuous and evil-disposed. Did she dwell on that other heritage, the never-ending bliss promised to the penitent? She seldom asked herself the question. Just now such thoughts were banished altogether. There was enough concerning others to think about.

On his ancestral bed old Avril awaited the

last sacraments — and his prodigal. Lambert had already returned, obtaining alike fatherly and priestly pardon. All knew that he was a mere tool in the hands of his brother. But since the awful denunciation of a week ago Raymond had given no sign. Folks began to think that he must be beyond the sea.

The house door stood wide; and, one by one, neighbours passed in, the rest lingering near. 'From time to time Gillette served out coarse bread and barley drink.

It was a strange sight, this gloomy festival, this holiday-making in the presence of death.

The women knitted, sewed, nursed their swaddlings whilst the men talked apart. From time to time all glanced anxiously at the passive figure on the bed, that large, lofty four-post bed with green serge curtains, on which many a patriarch of the same name had breathed his last, and which figured as a foremost heirloom in their wills.

As each leave-taker emerged into the sunlight he was besieged with questions.

"The old man, is he still himself?"

"Will Father Patrix make his testament afresh?"

"Does he speak of Raymond at all?"

"Is Airelle to marry Lambert?"

These questions were mostly answered in the negative. Avril lay silent and motionless, as if already the angel of death had passed that way.

The last farewells with friend and neighbour were brief and collected. Overmuch of toil and privation do not of necessity harden the heart, but they blunt the susceptibilities, and take off the fine edge of feeling. Only the women shed tears, as they pressed the veteran's hand, or dropped a kiss on his cold forehead.

If this interval was one of apparent calm, if, whilst awaiting the solemn procession, some seemed unmindful of their errand, one, at least, was evidently quite overcome. In the kitchen, ministering to the dying man, meekly obeying her mother, moved Airelle, but not the Airelle of yesterday, of a few hours ago!

A change had come over the usually self-composed, courageous girl, that bystanders accounted for easily enough.

"Poor young thing! Her first sight of a death-chamber," said one. "No wonder that she looks so white and strange!"

The shock, the new, moving experience, had evidently unnerved, rather stupefied her, folks thought. She spoke, hearkened, acted, indeed, as one deprived of volition, past all initiative, for the time being, unable to act for herself.

"Take a sip of cordial, girl," Isaye had said, in his kind, bluff way; but she refused the draught, swallowing, instead, ice-cold water from the fountain, it seemed to cool the fever within. Whilst automatically doing her mother's behests, she glanced from time to time at the little group outside. Eyes, ears, seemed abnormally alert. She watched as one in the grip of some terrible uncertainty on which hung issues of life and death.

That morning she had been aroused from too happy sleep, one long, blissful dream, by a terrible summons.

"Get up, my daughter. Dress yourself quickly, and go with me," said Isaye, "to be betrothed, maybe wedded, this very day. Raymond —"

Her look startled him. Evidently prepared for remonstrance, not, however, for the passionate appeal that now met his gaze, appeal too strong to be put into words, he added: —

"Your mother and I had decided otherwise; but our neighbour shall not die broken-hearted, nor his son go to perdition — if you can help it, of that we feel sure."

She understood the rest without another syllable. Raymond's rehabilitation depended upon herself; by means of her wedding-ring would he be reconciled with his dying father and the Church!

"Make haste, I say. The old man's head is once more clear as my own; and the harum-scarum may already be found for aught I know. There is not a moment to lose."

Then he went away. Airelle's first thought was of Father Patrix. He alone could save her. As she grew calmer she realized the fact that the curé must be the originator of such a compact, the author of these conditions. As well kneel to sticks and stones as to the easy-going priest where his calling and the Church were concerned! With unerring woman's instinct she knew that Father Patrix mistrusted, even disliked his former darling. The favourite of early days had become an insubordinate, a caviller to be put down and humbled.

In thus raising Raymond, he was lowering Raymond's wife.

Did not other causes exist for the priest's intervention? Had he not shown rancour towards Eudeline from the first? The spirit of the times was changing fast, who could say? Father Patrix might have devised the marriage as much on Eudeline's account as her own, thereby thinking to avert her union with a heretic. But to become Raymond's wife! Had Eudeline never crossed her path, had she never known the sympathy born of aspiration, thought, kindred tastes, the very notion must have revolted. To a nature so gentle and reserved as hers, the pastor's very austerity and cold intellectualism appealed, whilst from Raymond's overwhelming personality and rough physical masterfulness she shrank shudderingly. What would be marriage with such a man? Mere subjection of her poor beauty to a tyrant's will, existence of a conjugal slave consoled by coarse flattery and unwelcome caresses. And she felt it, she knew it; every day life by Raymond's side must drag her down and force her to his own level; years hence she should all but have forgotten the

past, that she had ever known a Eudeline, a Charlotte!

That thought was followed by tears. Oh, were Charlotte with her now! Were Charlotte at hand to plead for her, she should obtain deliverance! Then came another thought, not of solace but of conviction; an answer to her doubts, oracular response from her sibyl, a fortifying for the last sacrifice.

With suppressed, ecstatic sob, she drew forth a long, crossed, large-paged letter. It had been received several days before, passing on the road that missive of her own, entrusted to Eudeline. Charlotte's letters were ever learned by heart, yet as she read now, the following sentence seemed full of new and deep meaning. "Why so many praises, darling?" she wrote. "Why so much said about my poor little display of courage on the occasion of the riot here? I merely risked my insignificant life to save another's and avert a crime. After all, self-sacrifice is the mission of all those endowed with any mission. It is only by virtue of self-sacrifice that the moral world moves at snail's pace."

Charlotte was right. How easy, nay, how wel-

come were any other act of devotion, any surrender of self but this, thought Airelle, as she tremblingly followed her father to the farm!

It was a poor-looking place, standing on high ground, a low, one-storied cabin with mud walls and thatched roof but having a magnificent prospect, verdant, wooded country, wide pasture, the little river Vire making merry way amid the green. From this point to St. Lô and the sea all was dimpled verdure and smilingness, no asperity nor level lines. The Avril patrimony, Delle of the Bog, as it was called, was a mere patch upon spacious vesture skirt; in other words, foot by foot, rood by rood, it had been acquired from spendthrift seigneurs in past ages, not an Avril but adding to the little estate. For the first hour or two after Airelle's arrival, deathlike quiet reigned throughout kitchen and premises. When neighbours came up, she affected to be busy, looked another way; none got a word from her but the dying man.

With power of speech had returned clearness of mind. Avril was now himself again, stricken unto death, yet the Avril of old, cheery, resigned, stout-hearted.

"It is hard to leave the like of you," he whispered, as he pressed the pale girl's hand, his words upholding her courage, by anticipation rewarding many a self-imposed trial.

He had begged that the administration might be put off till the last moment, till Raymond's coming. The ceremony would impress his prodigal, perhaps turn his thoughts to piety and repentance. Of his return the old man never doubted; he had prayed for it so fervently to the Virgin and blessed saints, had vowed so many candles! When, therefore, towards noon, Airelle heard the tinkling bell, chanted *Miserere* and marching of feet, she knew that her fate was sealed. Raymond had come!

No timid, entrapped animal felt more helplessly despairing. The toils were about her; struggle and resistance useless. Nothing remained but to endure to the end. The solemn procession drew nearer and nearer; she caught sight of glittering crucifix and lighted taper; the words of the litany reached her ears.

Instantaneously all signs of animation ceased. Every head was uncovered, every knee bent, as the solemn train moved towards

the door. The humble precincts were turned into a church. Airelle did not now venture to look up. She felt sure that Raymond was close by. Gillette's deep-drawn sigh and whispered thanksgiving, Isaye's joyful kiss dropped on the brow of his old neighbour told her so much.

As the awe-inspiring procession filed in, her hand was caught, pressed, almost crushed in another, an arm of herculean sinew was thrown about her; she felt herself dragged, rather lifted to the bedside, unasked, taken as a right, in the midst of that scene of solemnity, a bridegroom's kiss was laid upon her lips.

As no prodigal figured Raymond here; would he so figure anywhere or under any circumstances? The fierce indomitable Norman spirit, of which he was the very incarnation, would never brook curb or bridle. The handsome, winning daredevil knew well enough that he was already forgiven. He seemed to have shaken off evil report as a garment. Even Father Patrix looked taken aback by such frank, unblushing self-assertion. Raymond understood the straight, easy way to his father's heart.

With one arm supporting the grand white head on the pillow, the other holding Airelle tight, he said, as he spoke, confronting the rest, —

"Raymond Avril, father, the head of the family; a real head too, they'll see! will be another."

"Hearken to him, all of you," murmured the old man, gazing proudly on the pair, adored first-born, yearned-for daughter-in-law; "and Raymond, Lambert, Elie, mind — forgive me, reverend father, a word to my children and I have done, — the Louis d'or finds its way out of a man's pocket, down his throat, but the soil does not walk on two feet, the land can't run away. And," here his eyes glistened, "times are better for the peasant, will be better still, so folks say; don't neglect the confessional, don't begrudge the consecrated loaf o' Sundays, and buy a bit of land whenever you can."

He paused, and a smile irradiated his shrewd face.

"A minute, reverend father. Raymond, 'tis said that the Marquis of Crouy is clearing out, crossing the seas. Buy that beautiful

clock that hangs over his stable, if to be had a bargain. How I should like to see it hanging yonder, and all of you," here he glanced towards the kneeling group in the doorway, "all of you neighbours coming to look at Father Avril's clock, saying, the proud old fellow, what in the world could he want with a clock? Can't he hear the one that belongs to the parish?"

Some smiled, some wiped away a tear.

"Just like him," folks whispered.

"Now, father, fire away," added the old man, glancing at the priest as he began, the little congregation falling on their knees joined in the litany. Solemn as was the service, it called forth no violent outburst of grief. Life is hard, death is common, the graveyard settles all accounts.

"Accipe, frater, viaticum corporis Domini nostri Jesu Christi qui te custodiet ab hoste maligno et perducat in vitam æternam. Amen."

This formula, pronounced in Latin, had no real, only symbolical, meaning for the sick man and those around him. They knew that it meant something supremely solemn, that was all, and who can say? Perhaps the very un-

intelligibility of the words enhanced their effect and rendered the final sacrament all the more awful. Anyhow, the patriarch breathed a sigh of relief when the wafer had passed his lips.

"You hurt my hand, dear Raymond; let go," whispered Airelle, as she rose from her knees. For answer came a still tighter grasp, and a smile but too well understood.

"For to-day then!"

As he spoke he loosed his hold, rather flung away her cramped fingers. Airelle belonged to him, henceforth coquetries, maidenly fencing, would not serve. She was his, and already the sense of pricelessness was lost in that of ownership.

CHAPTER XVIII.

YEARNING AFTER A SON.

It was only in times of festival and mourning that Judith felt alone. She could not associate herself with friends and neighbours at church, — the centre of village life, the focus of sociableness and fraternity. Thus, when every soul for miles round kept solemn or joyful holiday, when some chord had been struck that vibrated in every heart, the old Huguenot woman held aloof. Truth to tell, perpetual hounding down had fanaticized this good Judith with many another. Quite conceivably, Isaye and Gillette might be argued into literal as well as practical tolerance. Judith would sooner be brayed alive in a mortar than kiss the image of Virgin or saint.

"The Lord Almighty set the poor misguided creatures right!" she would say to herself. "Aye, and temper their chastise-

ments hereafter. I, for one, do not cry out for more burnings."

Formerly, alike baptism, bridal, or burial had meant to Judith a bit of Sunday. She was at liberty to put on her best clothes and read her favourite book of Esdras or Maccabees till the church-goers or roysterers came back. The house must be minded, that was all. And on return of wedding or funeral party she was never forgotten. Gillette would unlock the buffet and pour out a glass of old perry, Isaye and Eudette throw into her lap caramel or gingerbread brought from the feast.

On the morning of Father Avril's funeral she made her usual toilet behind the curtain, brought out her Bible, seated herself on the doorstep, but without attaining a Sabbath mood. The tolling bell alone broke the stillness. A brief interval of peace and rest from labour was before her. She could not read. No devotional fervour stirred her mind as she opened the volume, no religious ecstasy made her tremble as she found some darling text.

Before setting out for church Airelle had

stolen up to the alcove. Judith was in the midst of her toilet; but neither the coarse hempen shift with its long sleeves, high, many-boned buckram stays, nor hands brown as a gipsy's, could take away the dignity from her aged and homely figure. A certain placidity and reserve, an indescribable something, compensated for age, poverty, and poor circumstance.

No one else was near. Judith felt a soft cheek pressed to her own, caught a hurried, agitated whisper.

"Did they tell you?" she said. "I am to marry Raymond;" then turned away. But not before she had realized one thing: even Judith failed to understand her here. The gentle-hearted old woman was now occupied with delusions of her own. Passionate yearning, bitter disenchantment made even Judith appear selfish.

A blissful precedent induces hope and belief. We feel so sure that what has happened to please us once will happen again! As Judith settled down to her short holiday, she said that Eudeline would come. His first visit had been paid at such a time, — all the farm

folk absent, herself in Sunday best, the Bible outspread on her knees. She turned to her adored book of Esdras with wholly new feelings. How often, in days gone by, had she envied the son of Saraias! Would to her also would come the heavenly messenger who "took him by the right hand and comforted him and set him upon his feet!" — Uriel, the angel of light, admonishing, expounding, clearing up spiritual darkness. How often of late had she sent up the same bitter cry: —

"I have seen that I knew not and hear that I do not know; or is my sense deceived and my soul in a dream?"

To-day she craved no angelic vision, no miraculous sign. Had not Heaven vouchsafed her a son? Should she not be henceforth taught, comforted, and upheld by her own child?

Judith felt as certain of Eudeline's identity as if indeed some voice from above, even a visit from Uriel himself had revealed it; as certainly she counted upon her son's ultimate recognition. Proof might not be forthcoming, documentary evidence absent; natural clinging, filial instinct would take their place.

In a cheerful spirit she re-read those mighty talks of man and archangel, every verse having new significance.

"For evil shall be put out and deceit quenched.

"As for faith it shall flourish, corruption shall be overcome, and the truth which hath been so long without fruit shall be declared."

Judith paused. How mysterious, how awful seemed the voice of prophecy! Was not evil being put out in France; in other words, persecution of Christian men and women, injustice towards the poor, oppression of the weak? Would not the faith of her fathers flourish, when once more Protestant congregations were got together, churches rebuilt, schools opened for the young? And "corruption shall be overcome." That sentence she could interpret also. Alas! scores of feeble brethren and sisters had been bribed into abjuration, mammon as well as fiercest zealotry thinning the Protestant ranks.

"The truth which hath been so long without fruit—"

On a sudden Judith paused; as a maiden who hears her lover's step, she blushed and

smiled. The low, unanimous growl of her dumb companions, the glimpse of a black frock-coat could only mean one thing. Eudeline had come back, the son claimed his mother!

A minute later, and she was cruelly undeceived. Instead of the tall, spare, commanding figure ever in her thoughts, she saw a little, thick-set, unctuous looking man, wearing semi-clerical garb, but evidently not of pastoral rank, rather, some Scripture reader or evangelist. Calling off the dogs, she bade the stranger approach.

"Do I address Dame Judith Eudeline?" he asked.

"The same," was the faint reply.

Judith felt just then that sickness of heart so often named, so seldom believed in. As she rose, her knees trembled, her cheeks lost their ruddy tinge. The very voice of this man boded ill. He had come from Eudeline, and surely, with no good news!

"My sister," he said, unceremoniously crossing the threshold throwing aside cloak and wallet, "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, let us pray together,

offer up thanksgivings for the deliverance of our people, supplications that, in turn, we may be delivered from the enemies within, our own fleshly lusts and carnal passions."

No more pious nature existed than Judith's, nor was she wholly free from bigotry — was devout believer ever free? But of cant she did not possess a vestige. Such a bidding, on the part of an utter stranger, seemed untimely, even indecorous.

"The dogs would never put up with it," she replied, thus reminding him that they were under a Catholic roof. She dared not blurt out the query, "For God's sake, tell me true, has my son cast me off?"

The evangelist laughed disdainfully, and, opening his wallet, drew out a lump of coarse bread. Cutting it into three equal portions, smearing each with soft, sour cheese, carried in a bottle, he threw the exquisite morsels to Pyrame and his companions. They were swallowed whole, insinuating canine glances now being cast at the donor.

"We can't afford to let the Kingdom of Heaven be retarded by brute beasts," he said; "though I must say, the animal creation here-

abouts seem bent upon it. You would think every cow, donkey, goat, pig, to say nothing of dogs, cats, and turkey-cocks, were paid agents of the Pope, bottled-up spirits of our persecutors. See here."

With a rueful face he unfolded the clothes strapped to his wallet — coat, knee-breeches, and stockings showing various rents and tatters.

"A vicious cow's horn did that," he continued, pointing to one tear. "And just look there, my good woman; yonder breeches were as whole as the gown you have on your back when I set out only three days ago. But for my stout cudgel, I do believe the dogs at one place would have torn me to bits. And my stockings! you won't believe me, I dare say, but the geese and turkey-cocks at another farm set on me like a pack of wolves; it is their bills that have riddled these excellent hose, bought of a pedlar for twenty sols, last week. As to the pigs, — no sooner do I appear, than every grunter on the premises must do his very best to impede my progress, besmear me with filth, render the expounder of sweet truth a laughing-stock. Well, worse

things were cheerfully endured by the martyrs of old; and though I am ready to crack my windpipe in singing hallelujahs to-day, none readier for prison, the scaffold, aye, the stake, to-morrow. Let us pray."

Falling on his knees, rolling out his periods in louder and yet louder strain, he began his improvisation, Judith listening, taking part coldly. The well-intentioned evangelist had no idea that all the time he was being criticised by his listener's standard and condemned. Not after such fashion had been the prayers heard in her youth. Clear, calm, impressive from his very simplicity had been her own preacher, her own evangelist — Eudeline's father. These rambling, unctuous appeals, these ludicrous familiarities with the Holy Name, shocked alike her convictions and her taste. Were the Lord of Hosts, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit tavern companions to be told so trippingly off the tongue? Even the founders of the Reformed Church should be mentioned with more respect.

"Hush, Pyrame, Dragon! quiet, will you? Dinah, for shame!" she cried.

If neutral the effect of such claptrap elo-

quence upon herself, with the other listeners it was not so.

No sooner did the dogs see the bread and cheese put back, and its owner heedless of their tail-wagging and insinuation, than they set up a low whine.

The sound expressed longing and discontent only; but when the stranger began to groan, utter loud sighs, roll his eyes, and contort his limbs, the whine became a growl, the growl a bark.

The imperturbable prayer went on, Judith's cross looks and cries for a time subduing the four-footed mutineers. At length Pyrame sprang forward, and seized the coat lappet dangling on the ground. This was too much for the preacher.

"Confound those curs! Prithee, good mother, lay your broomstick about 'em well!" he cried, rising to his feet, flinging stick, knapsack, broad-brimmed felt hat at his assailants. Ever taking their cue from Pyrame, Dragon and Dinah had joined in the onslaught.

Judith was accustomed to such encounters. A huge, home-made birch broom lustily wielded, soon restored order, but not the evangelist's

temper. Was it malice or accident? Whilst brandishing her weapon to the right or left, Judith had let it come in contact with the good man's legs and shoulders.

"How can your masters keep such a crew?" he said, wiping his face with an enormous yellow pocket-handkerchief, rubbing his limbs, adjusting cravat and coat. "On my word, I thought I was going to be eaten up alive like the early Christians at Rome."

"I told you that the dogs would never stand it," Judith answered testily, herself in no unruffled mood. "Remember I am only a poor serving-woman, and my people are not of our religion. Those animals know it, I'll be bound. If Father Patrix were here, the parish priest I mean, all the family a-worshipping before stone images, Pyrame would look sanctified enough to swallow what they call the consecrated wafer itself. But your errand, good sir? I am sure you did not come for nothing?"

"Not to be eaten up by blood-thirsty curs, that's certain," retorted the evangelist preparing to go.

Would he never answer her query, won-

dered Judith, as she watched him deliberately open and repack his wallet. From the first she had dreaded his news but prolonged suspense was unbearable.

The smug little man seemed much more concerned about the arrangement of certain packages than Judith's affairs. Now a shirt got in the way of a neckerchief, now a pair of shoes took up too much room, finally the bag was closed and strapped.

"You, perhaps, brought word from—" Judith stopped short. The words "my son" were on her lips. She added instead, "from Pastor Eudeline?"

There are worthy souls mole-blind to the anguish-stricken or rapturous looks of others. The evangelist answered almost carelessly, quite unaware of fixed glance and close-set lips.

"Yes, my beloved brother in Christ sends you affectionate greeting; but for pressing calls on his time, he would have come hither to bid you farewell."

"He is crossing the sea?" cried Judith despairingly. "He is fleeing from his mother," she said to herself with keenest reproach.

Could it be otherwise? Eudeline, the gently reared, the man of the world, the scholar, resented her claim, would confront exile rather than have it proved!

"Even so, my good woman, may he labour earnestly in his Master's vineyard wherever he is; may his words be a sword piercing the careless and carnal-minded!"

"He said — he said —" Judith got out.

"You will hear from him; he will do his best to clear up those doubts you have raised as to his parentage. For this reason, the Lord leading him, his path lies across the deep waters. Could you shut up those venomous creatures for a quarter of an hour?" he added, pointing to the dogs.

"Have no fear, stranger, I will see you on to the road," Judith replied.

The visitor shouldered his burden, looking a little crestfallen. He had expected that Judith would be as anxious to listen as himself to expatiate.

"I would have offered up a short prayer on behalf of our beloved brother," he said. "It is of that I was thinking."

"My master and mistress won't tarry," was

the agitated answer. Misinterpreting Judith's discomposure, keeping a sharp eye on the dogs, he hurried away.

Five minutes later Sunday clothes were doffed, Bible consigned to its place, a clatter of wooden shoes and milking-pails broke the stillness.

"I shall lose my wits if I sit over the book to-day," — there was only one book in the world for Judith, — she said. "I'll scour and scour at those rusty vessels bought at the fair till they look like gold."

It was not the first time that hard, homely tasks wore the look of a benediction.

CHAPTER XIX.

PIPPINS AND PATRIOTS.

How dazzlingly bright and beautiful was that Norman landscape just before the apple harvest! In colder regions, throughout the windswept Pays de Caux, cider-making closes the year. In the Cotentin it begins towards the end of September. Eudeline's way led him from orchard to orchard, the formality of the trees planted in lines forgotten in the unimaginable glory of the fruit, — deepest purple, ruddy gold, pea green, glaring scarlet, rose pink, the blaze of colour set off by intense blue sky. Here and there one especial tree stood out as if illuminated by ruby-coloured globes, others recalled an orangery of the South, others again an avenue of camellias. Between these glowing gardens crimson flowered buckwheat and amber meads lent hues hardly less brilliant. And a few days later the entire population would be afield, old and

young, gathering, sorting, carting the fallen fruit; cider-presses would be busy as in ordinary times. Normandy, least afflicted province of the Ancien Régime, just now showed a smiling aspect to the stranger. But for wrecked convents, corn-mills, seigneurial dungeons and torture chambers, but for the passage of famine-stricken desperadoes towards the capital, hard were it to believe in the reality, the necessity of Revolution.

On the third day, having halted at this place and that, Eudeline reached his destination.

In one town or village he had stopped to confer with pastor or Scripture reader, in another, with Elder or candidate for the post of schoolmaster, in all to rally his brethren and muster the long-scattered Protestant forces.

He had now reached Caen full of his mission, of Airelle and Charlotte. It was a superb afternoon when he sat down to rest just outside the city. Below meandered the river, flowing for many a mile amid apple-orchards and pasture towards the low sea-coast, high above, proudly towering over the wide panorama, rose the mausoleums of the great Duke

William and his queen Matilda; cold, austere piles of stone and marble befitting the character of their builders.

The wayfarer rested between belt of golden mead or prairie and shining white city. Just behind, separated from the road by a low wall of loosely piled rubble stones and slanting upwards, were small enclosures, — orchard, vineyard, and plot of vegetables, each with ornamental summer-house. These belonged to the wealthier citizens; in most manufacturing towns where garden ground is limited, folks acquired such suburban gardens, there disporting themselves throughout what is called "the fair season."

As he rested, thus revelling in the prospect and deliciousness around, a peal of girlish laughter fell on his ears. So captivating, so contagious, that loud, yet by no means unmusical mirth, that he smiled to hear, even laughed as he glanced up. A serious countenance would seem a reproach to the unknown merry-maker.

"That won't do at all, Brown Eyes. Try again," he heard next, the voice, sweet, clear, joyous, proceeding he knew not whence.

Looking round, he now perceived four or five ragged urchins, each curly poll raised eagerly towards a certain apple tree on the other side of the wall.

It was of veteran growth laden with ruddy pippins and a ladder leaning against the trunk indicated gatherer at work. Eudeline could just see a man's arm moving among the upper branches, whilst below, where they spread out fan-wise, fluttered a white dress.

The young lady of the house had apparently made an arbour of the thickly interlaced boughs, as apparently she had found distraction in posing questions to these tatterdemalions, rewarding the successful with an apple. The nick-names, Brown Eyes, Long Neck, Square Shoulders, and the rest, further showed that her scholars were chance-found, youthful vagrants encountered by the way.

"Come," cried the nymph of the apple tree, "since Brown Eyes is dumb, you, Bare Arms, try your luck. Look at your prize, this splendid apple, fit for a king — I mean a Patriot. Now tell me, what is a Patriot?"

There was great giggling among the shaggy-

haired, barefoot crew below. Miserably as these boys were clad, if indeed they could be called clad at all, precarious, often insufficient as was their daily portion of black bread, true sons of Gaul, they could throw care to the winds. Kinglets amid their down and purple not gayer than these half-naked competitors for an apple!

"A patriot, — one who carries a gold watch and lots of dangling pendants," cried Bare Arms.

The bunch of seals, coins, pencil-cases, worn on the watch-chain, was a sign not of patriotism but of prosperity.

It was a new fashion. Every flourishing merchant or shopkeeper wore a mass of trinkets attached to his buttonhole.

Again came a merry peal from the apple tree.

"Think again, remember what I told you just now," said the young lady. "Patriotism is not a commodity that you can buy at a fair or from a pedlar's pack, it is something with which a man — or woman — must endow himself, herself, something far more precious than gold and not to be bought with a mine-ful.

Now if, after all my explanations, you cannot give me a proper answer, I shall say that you are all stupid little boys, not even deserving of a pippin."

"Sapristi, Mademoiselle Charlotte!" shouted a gruff voice from the upper branches. "I'll start yonder fry with my stick as soon as I get down. Don't waste the pick of the crop on the like of 'em."

Nothing daunted, each shaggy poll was again scratched in turn, and much giggling and whispering took place. In the midst of the confabulation a slyboots of seven, smallest, thinnest, and most ragged of the group, ran up to Eudeline and put his mouth to his ear.

"Stranger, can you tell me what is a patriot?" he said, glancing round, hoping to be unobserved.

"Nay, my little man," Eudeline replied. "If the answer does not come from your own brain the apple cannot find its way to your mouth. Think of what the demoiselle said a minute ago."

Square Shoulders — Bare-ribbed would have better suited the bony little creature as a name — thought and thought.

"Has the word patriot to do with beautiful long hair, stranger? That, of course, can't be bought of a pedlar."

Eudeline shook his head, and just then a chorus of eager replies reached the girlish umpire in white muslin, one and all mere guess-work, uttered with wild impatience.

"A patriot, — that's the gentleman who throws us comfits when the curé has baptized his baby," cried one.

"A patriot, — he's the merry Andrew who dances on his head at the fair," shouted a second.

"A patriot, — that's the watchman with the voice you can hear half a league off," ventured a third.

A mirthful, impatient laugh and quick, decisive answer checked this outburst of emulation.

"No more, my little green geese, my poor dear simpletons, my arrant dunderheads. Now listen to me, — you shall each have an apple for guessing, — listen and remember my words. By and by you will be big lads, and in good time men, able to serve France as soldiers, sailors, in scores of ways. Are you each listening with both ears?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" came from each wide-open mouth.

Eudeline would never forget that clear, sweet voice, almost solemn, despite the speaker's playful mood.

"A patriot, then, is one who would joyfully die for his country. Now catch who can."

Down came a shower of apples, thick as hailstones; pell-mell, helter-skelter, on hands and knees rushed, struggled, sprawled the breathless crew. Then every one having laid hold of luscious prize, all scampered away fast as legs could go, the donor receiving not so much as a nod of thanks.

Eudeline, to whom this little scene had been full of suggestions, now shifted his place. A few paces brought him within sight of Mademoiselle Charlotte and her surly companion overhead.

The old gardener now stepped down backward, having on his shoulders, held by one hand, a rude osier basket full of apples. As he slowly descended he muttered bearishly, —

"Humph, 'tis well for their backs that they're well out of reach of my stick. Patriot, indeed!

as if the like understand but one thing — a bellyful."

"We have plenty of apples, Sebastian," said the young lady reproachfully, and helping herself to one of the choicest of his gathering, bit into it with her perfect little teeth.

What a tableau she made there, — fruit and leafage affording pictorial background, the effect of the whole heightened by force of contrast!

Whilst the figure of the old man was almost repellent in its sordidness and rugosity, the girl's owed its loveliness to character and expression. Here was dazzling, girlish beauty, combined with a look of immense and almost startling decision. Entirely free from self-consciousness, apparently careless of the loveliness to which none could be blind, this burst of spontaneous gaiety but hid a deeply passionate, self-reliant, self-sufficing nature. Frolic, warm-heartedness, expansion alternated with far-reaching, concentrated thought, solemn searching of deep problems, an inner existence wholly impersonal. Could any, having seen such a face, ever forget?

Eudeline waited and waited. The crusty

old man had shovelled his apples into a sack and climbed a second tree; Mademoiselle Charlotte had munched her own and cast away the core. Still she sat there, and, as he soon perceived, intent upon a tiny volume.

The wayside halt was free to all. In turn he bethought himself of a book, determined to sit out the student among the branches. For half an hour or so the daintily-poised figure never stirred. The leaves in her hand were turned slowly; but on a sudden she sprang up.

"Sebastian," she cried, in authoritative, yet no ungentle tones, "have an eye to the sack. I am going home."

A gruff rejoinder came from overhead, and, stepping gracefully backward, the slender, white-gowned figure descended the ladder.

CHAPTER XX.

A GIRL REVOLUTIONARY.

"A THOUSAND apologies," said Eudeline, advancing, and producing Airelle's missive. "I am a stranger in your town. May I ask you to direct me to the address on this letter?"

Smiling assent, the girl bent down and began to read aloud, "To Mademoiselle Charlotte —"

She stopped short, colouring with pleasure.

"It is for myself!" she cried, seizing the letter delightedly.

"My surmises," ejaculated Eudeline in an undertone.

The young lady confronted him, her attention at once turned to Airelle's messenger. She did not speak, but plainly as words could say, her eyes interrogated him now.

Who and what are you? her face said.

"You wonder, and naturally, that I should have guessed your name," he began. "No

less strange must appear the person of your foster sister's letter-carrier. I am, then, a nursling, I should rather say, an offspring, — with how many more! — of the Revolution; in other terms, a Protestant pastor. But yesterday I had no right to standing-ground on native soil; henceforward, thanks to the National Assembly, I am a man, a citizen, a son of France."

His listener stood still eyeing him curiously. She was on the inner side of the low rubble wall, her arms resting on the top, her head bent slightly forward. Nothing could be more unstudied than pose, nothing more natural than voice, look, manner. Dress, too, was simplicity itself, — broad-brimmed gipsy hat tied under the chin with a pink ribbon, white cambric dress with close-fitting sleeves, and muslin kerchief.

Nothing, thought Eudeline could have improved the picture. As he gazed he no longer marvelled at Airelle's enthusiasm, at the legendary Charlotte of the Delle. To him also this strangely seductive girl would henceforth become a legend. Her surroundings, accessories, circumstances, might be commonplace enough;

character would ever mark her from others, lift her in some way or another out of the crowd. The sportive gaiety of half an hour before had vanished. She looked up full of grave inquiry.

"My foster parents are staunch Catholics. How came you in their way?" she asked, with evidently many another question to put.

"But they were revolutionary by anticipation, tolerant even when tolerance was a crime. You have not forgotten Judith, the old Huguenot dairy-woman?"

"Your errand was of course with her, your fellow-Protestant. I might have guessed."

She turned the letter over in her hand, kissed it with childish impetuosity, pressed it to her cheek.

"Ah, those were good days, — how I loved every one at the Delle! Tell me, reverend sir, is my foster sister well? Does she seem happy?"

His look answered the question but too plainly.

"They will force her to marry against her will? If I could only go to my Airelle!" she said.

With trembling fingers she tore open the folded sheet, glancing at a line here and there, murmuring to herself as she read. When she

looked up, Eudeline saw that she knew all. The missive was thrust into her bosom. Further perusal could wait; she wanted to make the most of present opportunities, to sympathize with Airelle's friend. Eudeline, for his part, felt that even Charlotte's intercession here were vain. In one respect, Revolution, the new order of things, had come too late. But this sweet wayside greeting, this unexpected, uncalled-for interest and good-fellowship came welcomely and would cheer his onward path.

"Go to her if you can; there is no time to lose," he said, taking up stick and knapsack, feeling that he ought not to stay longer. "In any case—"

He finished his sentence in a tone of deep earnestness.

"In any case the mere sight of your face will afford supreme consolation. And strengthening, too! You hardly realize how much this poor foster sister of yours leans on you, looks to you for guidance and support."

A sudden change came over his listener. A minute before her eyes had met his own, tearfully, all a woman's natural winning ten-

derness and compassion given unasked. No words were needed to express what was passing in her mind. The personal note now vanished, the look of keenly affectionate interest faded. Her foster sister, Airelle's lover, were forgotten, one thought driving out all others.

"Whither must each of us turn for guidance and support in these days?" she cried. "Can any murmur if fortune betrays, if destiny plays us false, so long as the future of humanity is assured, Revolution marches its triumphal way? You, at least, reverend sir, one of the emancipated, one whose ancestors were doubtless martyrs of conscience, cannot surely dwell on individual loss, isolated sorrows and privation at such a time. Think of what a single day has done for France, for the world!"

"You allude to the Fourth of August?" he said quietly, this schoolgirl's enthusiasm putting his own to shame. "Yes, I admit it; to have swept away centuries of abuse in twenty-four hours is a superhuman achievement, — a phenomenon unparalleled in the world's history. But the building up again, the substitution of a new fabric for the old,

the forming of new systems, laws, precedents, will the task prove easy?"

The fair head under the gipsy hat was tossed impatiently.

"What happened when Tarquin was expelled from Rome?" she cried. "Are there no Roman hearts — and heads — in our France? Look at the new law-makers of Versailles, — do you not find makings of a Camillus, a Brutus in their ranks? And Roman women; these, too, are to be found by many a hearth, behind many a baby's cradle. Oh, I am glad that I did not die before the fall of the Bastille!"

He smiled at her ardour and at her beauty. The next moment his face saddened.

"Heroism, courage, self-devotion are plants of spontaneous growth. But the faculty of government, the habit of administration, these must be learned, inculcated, practised. Have you thought of that? I dare not feel too hopeful for the future."

His discouragement, far from damping her ardour, seemed to stimulate and inspire. A laugh that recalled the sparkling gaiety of the apple-giver fell on his ears. She had now

[illegible] from the [illegible] and [illegible] her [illegible] [illegible]

"[illegible] I [illegible] it [illegible] by night and day I [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] —"

[illegible] gazed at him with a peculiar expression, an expression that [illegible] him [illegible]

"[illegible] must think of self. One and all we must be ready to sacrifice everything. I hope you Protestants preach the duty of patriotism and self-immolation from the pulpit otherwise—" She paused.

"Otherwise you think our ministry fruitless, perhaps even enervating?"

"Shall I tell you what I think?" she replied, looking at him with fearless candour. "I am, as you would learn from my foster sister, of orthodox parentage and bringing up. But I think for myself, I read history, I form my own conclusions. Surely, sir, the time is gone by when dogma can save a State, should be the standard of all things! Look at France, child of the Church, its ruler godson of the Pope himself, not an ordinance framed but must conform with set rules of theologians! Has our country flourished under such a dis-

pensation? Have French kings been righteous, patriotic, pure-minded men? Have French laws been just and merciful? Has French policy been in the interests of the people? No, sir; I respect your calling, but it is not one that can help us now. Instead of priests and pastors we want soldiers, law-givers, patriots."

She saw that Eudeline was unconvinced.

"Do not think that I despise the services rendered by your ancestors," she said quickly. "I own for religious enthusiasts I have small sympathy. But the brave stand made by your forerunners for liberty of conscience, the sufferings you Protestants have endured rather than perjure yourselves for a tyrant's pleasure, who can be ungrateful for these? Who can help seeing the share they have had in the Revolution?"

"I hope Protestants may be of greater service still," Eudeline said. "When passions are inflamed, even the virtuous and lofty-minded are apt to swerve. Then is the preacher's turn; then should he point to the incarnation of perfect righteousness and absolute purity, to the One Name ever in morality an infallible guide."

His listener toyed with her hat strings, smiling dubiously. The seed had evidently fallen upon stony places.

"You seem to have thought deeply upon many things," he went on, anxious to say more on his own behalf. She interrupted with an impatient little sigh.

"Thought, thought! If only women could act instead of thinking, — who knows? My own turn will come!"

"It has surely come already. Hearsay has not belied you concerning a certain occurrence in this city not many weeks ago. Did not a girl of your name save a citizen's life and avert a horrible crime?"

The glowing face was bent down. He hardly knew whether his tribute had pleased or no.

"And the occasion for such heroism, one incident of many, alas! no isolated case! Does it not convince you of the dangers in store, the necessity of caution and compromise?"

She looked up indignantly as one answering a personal charge.

"The poor, starving, outraged, misguided people, what are their excesses to those of

bigots, tyrants, voluptuaries? I have heard my father say that one day's royal hunt during the reign of the great king cost the year's harvest of a whole province. Was not the peasant's corn thus trampled underfoot more precious than stone images, bricks, and mortar? Must a nation starve for the sake of a despot's gala? Oh! how I hate kings!"

Before he had time to reply she suddenly changed the subject, perhaps glad to find diversion elsewhere, perhaps reproaching herself for undue impetuosity.

"Tell me, where is your pastorate to be. In the Bessin, near the Delle?"

"Near her," was on her lips, but she stopped short, not liking to look up; she felt sure that her listener was colouring.

"What matters where, in so far as Airelle and myself are concerned," he replied bitterly. "I am a Huguenot and a minister, because I cannot help myself, because heterodoxy is in the blood, the pastoral calling an imperative, irresistible instinct; she is Catholic born and bred."

His listener raised her eyes now and looked at him, no longer doubtfully, half contemptu-

ously, but with an expression of respectful wonder.

Could real enthusiasm, ardour worthy the name, be called forth except by patriotism, by Revolution?

He read her thoughts.

"You will think better of me when you learn more," he said, "rather, I should say, blame me less for swelling the ranks of the dreamer, the visionary. What easier than for me to throw aside these impediments, free myself from what are but lendings after all? A layman, a nominal Catholic, and I might step in between Airelle and her destiny, supplant her brutal lover. I cannot, because I dare not, I must not. Conscience holds me in her grip."

"I am very sorry for you and for her," was the calm, almost cold reply. She did not in the least understand his scruples, but could realize what they cost him. He almost thought he discerned rising tears.

"Fare you well," she added, turning to go; there seemed nothing more to say, no word available for personal looking forward

or encouragement. "Fare you well, sir. Let us all live — if need be, die — for France!"

He stood still gazing after her, the vision before his eyes when the reality had vanished. Nor did time, absence, or shifting scenes dim the picture, that girlish face shaded by gipsy hat, now sparkling with gaiety, now almost portentous in its look of deep, solemn thought.

Should he ever see her again, this bright, beautiful, legendary Charlotte, already to himself as to others a being apart, one for whom, beyond doubt, the years reserved some great destiny?

CHAPTER XXI.

FLEEING FROM A MOTHER.

"SURELY you mistake, in a certain sense underrate, your calling? If I mistake not, you possess gifts and talents that will stand you in better stead outside the pulpit. Our happy — or unhappy — country needs the politician rather than the preacher; the legislator, the law-maker, rather than the evangelist. We can put our hands on a posse of enthusiasts any day and in any place. But half a dozen clear heads, a few of sound judgment, where will you go for these? Where can France look for statesmen, seeing that she has hitherto been the nursery of despots? You, friend Eudeline, have been educated in self-governing England. From you we should surely be able to learn something?"

"None more willing to teach," was the reply.

"Then why this clinging to the ministry? To a profession narrow, circumscribed at best.

Leave the Sunday sermon to others, quit the country, settle in Paris. Throw yourself into the political vortex. Try to be of use, to make your voice heard there."

Eudeline smiled, and glanced at the speaker.

How could he make plain what was passing in his mind, — on the one hand, that irresistible, unaccountable magnetism towards the pastorate; on the other, that equally strong craving for a life of action? Such contradictions might be understood by some, hardly by his present listener, one of those wealthy, benevolent Havrais merchants who had contrived to remain in France and prosper, despite the ban of heterodoxy. A man may be God-fearing, honest, even devout, yet lack the stuff of which martyrs are made. A despot may be fanaticized to the point of ferocity, yet excuse profitable traffic with the Evil One; in other words, the acceptance of Huguenot bribes on the plea of urgent necessity.

Thus it had come about that whilst the poor and the simple-minded were robbed of their children, driven from their homes, sent to the galleys, the stake, or the gibbet, many an opulent house was able to withstand fiercest persecution.

Eudeline's host, rich ship-builder and mayor of this noble seaport over against the English coast, was a staunch but by no means perfervid Protestant. With many another, he had long ago come to the conclusion that the true philosophy of life is to be sought in action rather than beliefs; that the ideal government, or any approaching the ideal, must concern itself with men's doings rather than their creeds, set actualities before aspirations, however elevated or consolatory. His easy port, shrewd smile, mellow voice and air of unpretentious assurance betokened the man of business and of the world. A certain benignity of manner and deliberateness of speech indicated something more. Ever a Providence to his tormented brethren, the worthy Havrais was at the same time a patriot. As in earlier times he had been moved by the trials of his fellow-Protestants, he was moved by the dangers besetting his country now; and whilst, with regard to the first, his chief concern had been for commercial ruin, broken-up industries, wrecked homes, money losses, so to-day his thoughts turned to practical issues. He foresaw the perils of Theory

let loose upon the world, a state, a society, in the hands of Utopians!

"The news from Paris becomes more and more disquieting every day. Read this," he said, taking up a newspaper. Then throwing it down again, continued: —

"Time enough for the poring over print by and by. I want your ear."

Closing the door, and drawing nearer, he went on: —

"When I suggested the capital just now, I was far from speaking at random. Truth to tell, a syndicate is being formed among certain of my fellow-citizens, chiefly members of the Reformed Church, for the purpose of bringing out a good daily journal. Funds are forthcoming; writers, forsooth, in plenty. What we want are men like yourself, reared in a country boasting of free institutions, already familiarized with the working of representative government, able to speak authoritatively on the subject of parliamentary legislation. It is terrible to think of what unbridled enthusiasm may do if the voice of experience and common sense cannot make itself heard. And instead of remaining by, to stem the tide, instead of

following the example of their English compeers over the water, our nobility, our governing classes, as they might be, are fleeing the country, advertising France as a worthless hull, abandoned to winds and waves, unable any longer to shelter even a few rats!"

His listener was silent; again with that thought uppermost in his mind, how could he make his motives clear, how explain conduct apparently inexplicable? The very career for which he yearned lay within reach, yet he must draw back. This offer meant so many things dear, the one thing dearest to him; his clerical profession given up, once more a layman, he might even dream of love and marriage, of Airelle! Except for that mysterious clinging, that irresistible attraction to the ministry for which he could not account, he would have yielded at once. He took refuge in demur.

"Give me a little time," he said. "From my heart I thank you, sir, but—"

"Nonsense! the indebtedness would be ours. Come," said the other, laying a friendly hand on his shoulder, "be open with me. There is a hidden motive for your indecision. I see

how it is. You will, and yet you will not. Yes and no alternate on your tongue. Do you hesitate to embark upon what may at first sight appear a precarious livelihood? Set such scruples aside. Are you bound by any obligations, promises, or the like, vowed from childhood to the pastoral calling? If so, surely the times we live in, the crisis upon crisis we are just now witnessing, more than justify a putting back of the hand from the plough."

Eudeline was silent. Then, overcoming alike pride, vanity, and self-consciousness, he blurted out: —

"You are right; I will, and I will not. Yes and no alternate on my tongue. Now hear my reasons, fanciful enough you will doubtless deem them. I was not brought up to the ministry. Indeed, my guardians — I was left an orphan in childhood — set their faces against such a calling from the first. But I felt drawn towards it by a force against which I was resistless. No sooner had I reached the age of manhood than I decided to become a pastor, and if ever the laws should permit it, return to France."

"You probably come from clerical stock, at least so would your name make it appear. Protestant Eudelines formerly abounded in this part of France, hence the feeling you speak of. Sons so often choose to follow in their fathers' footsteps."

"No," Eudeline replied. "My parents, or at least reputed parents, belonged to a mercantile family that had been rich and in a good position of life up till the abhorred Revocation. Some members — Heaven forgive their lapse — made a compromise, either feigning neutrality, perhaps even conversion, or purchasing safety."

His listener coloured, coughed uneasily, and looked another way. Eudeline was too much absorbed in his own story to notice the worthy Havrais' embarrassment.

"Here comes the most curious part of my narrative," he went on. "I return to France. I tramp the country in search of a congregation, in order to organize a church; and in a remote village, under a Catholic roof, find an old Protestant dairywoman who claims me as her son."

"My dear sir, visionaries, illuminati have

existed in every sect, and will ever exist. The good soul has doubtless dreamed it. Some angel has appeared to her in her sleep."

Eudeline shook his head.

"You would not think so could you see Judith Eudeline, sturdy, practical sense incarnate, an excellent creature, moreover, whose life has been one long lesson of quiet heroism and endurance. No, I cannot lightly regard the matter; and one reason for my hesitation to accept your most tempting offer is the necessity of a journey to London. I wish to obtain irrefutable proof of my birth."

"Excuse me for interrupting you, for absenting myself a moment," broke in the Mayor. "A solution has struck me. I may be able to throw some light on the subject, at least offer a clue."

He went away, leaving Eudeline lost in uneasy thought. Before the windows of the Hôtel de Ville lay a grandiose and heart-stirring prospect, — sparkling sea, harbours crowded with masts, suburban hills, white villas sprinkling the green, — on all sides a scene suggestive of peace and wealth. He saw none of these things, his host's return rousing him as

from slumber. The Havrais came back laden with heavy folios, official records, on which lay the dust of years.

"You mentioned just now that the name of this good woman is the same as your own, also that you cross the sea in order to obtain indubitable proofs of your birth. Have you, then, yourself any misgiving on the subject? Do you belong to the numerous victims of persecution, despoiled not only of substance and citizenship, but of patronymic? Nay, do not shrink from the thought as from an insult. Such cases, alas! have been only too common."

"Pardon me," Eudeline said, with sudden agitation. "I confess I am staggered. I never for an instant dreamed —"

He paused for a moment, changing from a deep blush to pallour.

"I could not suppose that there was any mystery about my birth and origin. Every circumstance seemed plain as day."

Noticing his distress, the other patted him encouragingly on the shoulder.

"Nor may mystery exist," he said, adjusting his spectacles, and opening the huge volume

before him. "Yet since, as you say, you were reared by guardians, and have no recollection of either parent, the contingency I speak of would touch you more in the spirit than in the letter. My meaning is, that, although of course you cling to your supposed — we will say supposed — father and mother, there would be no wrench of affection in finding out that you owe your existence to others."

He turned over the pages, Eudeline watching him with a blank face. "What mattered it all?" he repeated to himself. "Why need he feel dismay?"

"Of all persecutions, religious persecution is the most diabolical," said the Mayor, in his mellow, genial tones. "Just listen; is it any wonder that many a Protestant orphan was fathered and mothered by strangers, that many a reputed son or daughter came of alien stock? You are aware, I presume, sir, that the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was not deemed severe enough by the advisers of Louis XV.? In 1744 was promulgated that monstrous law depriving French Protestants of their children. The royal warrant not only consigned innocent men and women to the Bastille, but tore babes

and helpless minors from their mothers' arms. Having robbed us of every earthly blessing, our tormentors hit upon this method of bringing us to reason. The inhuman measure caused instead a sudden, an immense exodus, especially from these shores. Meantime, here and there, children were thus kidnapped by *lettre de cachet* and placed in Catholic orphanages. Many such cases came under my immediate notice."

He placed his finger on a page of the volume, but before beginning to read, added: —

"In December, 1763, two young girls, daughters of a widow well known to me, were torn from their home and shut up in a convent at Rouen. The particulars are here in black and white, officially attested. That is just twenty-five years ago. Now hear what took place only the other day and in the neighbourhood of this very city. The extract is from the municipal archives, and from a letter addressed by one Jean Hébert to the Count de Vergennes, Secretary of State in 1783.

"'MONSEIGNEUR, — An unhappy father kneels to you imploring the restitution of his son, torn from him by force. On Wednesday last,

the twenty-ninth of April, four cavaliers of the maréchaussée came to my dwelling at midnight with an order signed by the King, and carried off our son, aged eleven years and three months, not vouchsafing a word as to his destination. You also are a father, Monseigneur, natural feeling is the same in all ranks and sects; judge, therefore, of the despair of your suppliant. Belonging as I do to the Protestant religion, I much fear that this outrage is due to the mistaken zeal of the curé of our parish.'"

The ponderous tome was shut and Eudeline's host glanced at him suggestively.

"I could multiply instances, cite numerous passages in point but it is not necessary. I merely call your attention to the complications that might arise, without doubt have arisen, from this thrice accursed edict. Again, reflect upon the terrible insecurity of the baptismal register. Till within the last two years, as you know, if baptized, married, buried with religious ceremony at all, Protestants were forced to accept the Romish ritual. When these were rejected, how difficult to supplant them by accredited testimony! Nor did fanat-

icism stop here. Protestants were not allowed to make their wills, nor to attest signatures, hence another source of error. This good woman did, perhaps, lose a son by royal warrant?"

"Such indeed was the case," Eudeline replied drearily; the mother he sought to elude seemed to come nearer and nearer.

"A moment, one moment, and I have done. Suppose that a child of the same age, very likely of the same name, a common one, as I have said, among our community, had died soon after being consigned to conventual orphanage; might not blunders happen, identity become confused? Might not the child interred within convent walls be mourned over by those who were not his parents, the child rescued owe bringing up to strangers? For, as you probably know," added the speaker, "the Normandy parliament, leading men, public opinion, made their cries heard. The royal advisers were ashamed, — ofttimes bribed into surrender of these kidnapped, Protestant children. Many orphans were provided for by rich Havrais, many sent to England and Holland at their expense.

Take my advice, let not this matter trouble you. Renounce your journey Londonward. You say that you have left neither kith nor kin beyond sea. Adopt, rather provide for this good soul and—go to Paris! Woo the printing press and the cause of Revolution!"

CHAPTER XXII.

WAITING.

SNOW does not lie long on the Norman seaboard. Throughout the Bessin cattle winter afield, by dawn and twilight the copper vessels of the milkers glittering amid the bare branches, making points of light, brilliant coruscations in the neutral tinted landscape. No glittering sheets of unbroken snow were here, no dazzling nights and days of cloudless frost as in Dauphiné and Auvergne; instead, gray, misty heavens, intervals of quiet rainfall or swirling wind. Times were gone by when neighbours met together on winter evenings, the wood fire, a single hempen torch serving a dozen families, the women busy with distaff or lace pillow, the men botching their rope harness or making osier baskets, grandsires and grandames with children at their knee prattling of former days. Nor indeed had this custom of the Veillée ever taken root here

as in the adjoining province of Brittany. The Norman peasant, though a passionate lover of the dance, was by temperament exclusive, stay-at-home, rationalist. The long stories of ghost, goblin, and will-o'-the-wisp that enticed the Breton abroad during the long, dark December nights had no charm for his neighbour.

But a change had come over rural habits throughout the entire length and breadth of France. Revolution had replaced the Veillée by the news-letter. All who could now flocked to café or cabaret, there reading, hearing, discussing the latest news from Paris. The least excitable, the least revolutionary found themselves forced into the current. None at such a time could remain heedless. Isaye and Gillette — Airelle's pupils — had long overtaken their teacher. The pair could both read, and, when she was not by, would spell out for the twentieth time the last extract received from Charlotte. The young lady had a passion for extracts, and was constantly sending, now some pregnant passage of Montesquieu, now of the English Locke in translation, adding her own comments and elucidations. She had

also sent books from time to time, — an odd volume of Amyot's *Plutarch*, sundry little volumes of history, one a rendering from Hume. And every Isaye and Gillette had their Charlotte, — the simplest souls some exponent of Revolution at hand, some ardent advocate of popular government. These good folks had marched no faster than their neighbours. In this hamlet of a hundred and odd families Father Patrix alone remained stationary. The easy-going, unteachable curé sulked, frowned, threatened, persuading himself that the time for retribution and penitence was at hand. He could not as yet punish his parishioners for their opinions; with royalty, church, and noblesse, he but abided his time.

"You will see what you will see!" he began one day, after a good humoured argument over hot galettes and stewed hen. "These newfangled notions, I tell you, are like quackeries sold at a fair. You cannot deny it, my good Isaye, often have you come home with some wonderful cure for the blight in corn or the murrain in sheep, but how many days have you been able to boast and brag I should very much like to know?"

Whereupon his listener made quiet answer: "Nay, father, is it quackery to let a man enjoy his own?"

"And how has your fine gentleman speechifying at Paris done this, pray?"

"Well, in more ways than I can stop to tell you. Take our Judith, for example—"

"Oh, if you come to heretics, my good man, if Revolution has so far turned your head and warped your judgment as to make you think that folks have a right to take up any heretical fandangle they please, mum is the word for me. Another galette,—the brown one, good mother,—and let us change the subject."

Maugre these little differences, the worthy priest and his flock remained on the best possible terms. Father Patrix, moreover, was the last man in the world to let convictions become perilous. He knew well enough that whatever happened, his parishioners would stand by him; and he had long ago decided against the folly of martyrdom. Should ugly reports prove true, and even harmless confessors be meddled with, he determined to bow to circumstances, do as he was told, and keep

a quiet tongue in his head. No times these for vaingloriousness and affected sainthood, — rather for caution and good common sense!

Judith was full of quite other thoughts. Deaf to the thunders of Revolution, she only heard the unquiet throbbings of her own heart.

Would her son come back soon? Would he stand on the threshold, — living image of her dead husband, — looks, rather than voice, saying, "Mother, my mother!" Or had she wholly frightened him away, scared him with that passionate claim? There was nothing to do but wait and hope.

She felt convinced that whenever he did come the visit must be made on a Sunday. Pastoral duties were sure to bring him that way on the resting day. Folks were ever accessible then, whilst during the week they were scattered afield. It was always after mass that Gillette and her good man enjoyed a little leisure. Eudeline must of course confer with these; in any case, see her kind patrons.

Strangely enough, Judith rarely speculated on the future. She seldom found herself dreaming of the morrow except in so far as

it concerned Eudeline's verdict. One thing, and one only, she craved, — his acknowledgment; a moment, a moment only of satisfied yearning and entire understanding. Then the man of the world, the scholar, the semi-Englishman might go his way, leaving her to the drudgery of the farm and an outer existence wholly unchanged.

No less strange was Judith's shrinking from the only being able to sympathize with her. Between the old serving woman and the young daughter of the house had arisen a certain reserve, almost a coldness. When Airelle was by, the mother had felt herself doubly bereft, a second time robbed of her son, Eudeline having eyes, ears, for no one else.

Nor was Airelle here deceived. She saw plainly enough that the least sign of interest in the pastor was taken ill. Judith resented sympathy; here she courted utter solitude. Thus the two drifted from each other when most in need of confidence. As will often happen, a sentiment noble in itself divided noble natures. From littleness both were free, but Judith's passionate clinging now took the form of jealousy. Airelle's feeling,

suppressed, made her appear self-centred, even hard. Gradually she refrained from all allusion to Eudeline, and every day brought the rest topics more engrossing. Judith's suppositions soon seemed to be forgotten.

Noel was over. An added brightness and transparency of atmosphere heralded the spring. Already in this mild seaboard region folks began to resume summer toil and habits.

It was Sunday morning, and, although hot embers glowed on the hearth, the door was flung wide, letting in warm sunshine. Just outside, standing pools spoke of recent rainfall, but above the wet, bluish-green pastures shone a bright blue sky, magpies chattered among the mistletoe boughs, starlings darkened the heavens here and there; on all sides were signs of coming spring.

On the glowing pasture contentedly grazed the red and white cows, their brilliant coats now, as in June, contrasted with the bright heavens and emerald grass.

An event is looked for from day to day, pictured a thousand times and under every variety of circumstance, but never comes to

pass after looked-for fashion. There was no presaging tremor in Judith's breast, no thrill of expectation. A moment before she had been alone, the next he was there!

For many a Sunday she had been quite unable to concentrate her thoughts; the Bible would be taken out, opened on her lap, but remain unread. To-day, she hardly knew how it happened, that favourite book of Esdras became once more alive with meaning. A well-conned passage brought former comfort:—

"Where is Uriel, the angel who came unto me at the first? . . . And as I was speaking, behold he came. And lo! I lay as one that had been dead and mine understanding taken from me; and he took me by the right hand and comforted me and set me upon my feet."

"Good day," said a voice, neither unsympathetic nor discouraging, but hardly that for which she waited, hardly that of the angel Uriel!

"You doubtless looked for my return long ere this," Eudeline added, in the same even, matter-of-fact tones, yet with an ease and

elation of manner he had never showed before. Uninvited he passed in, uninvited threw down hat, staff, and cloak.

"Is it well with you all?" he asked.

Housewifely, motherly ever, Judith had moved towards the hearth, and, in spite of her agitation, putting mouth to the bellows, a cheery blaze soon sent out warmth. The traveller held first one hand to the flaming logs, then the other.

"Neither particularly well nor ill," Judith replied. "As you left us, you find us. Except that—"

She paused, once more plied the bellows, then rising from her knees, added:—

"One of us has gone to the grave, and one—"

"I trust you have not lost either of your kind protectors?" Eudeline broke in.

"Nay, nay," was the sad, almost sullen reply. "Sound as apples are Isaye and Gillette, but the old man, neighbour Avril, has gone to his grave, and our Airelle to the altar—"

Her listener turned round sharply, as if questioning, even defying, her statement. It is not so, it cannot be, his face said.

"We buried our neighbour soon after har-

vest, and Airelle wedded his firstborn just before cider-making," Judith said, still sad and sullen.

He stood stock still, a look of keenest anguish succeeding fenced-off conviction. In spite of her passionate yearning, Judith felt no pity. This man, her son, was grief-stricken, had just received a deathblow to fondest hopes; his rigidity, his sudden speechlessness told her this. Yet she was merciless.

Could he help knowing that she was hanging upon his lips, breathlessly awaiting his yea or nay, valediction or greeting that meant final coming together? And he could forget these things, as a lovesick boy dwell only on the girl who had pleased him best, and was now the wife of another?

Her stolid endurance came to an end, her love was almost turned to hate as she said curtly:—

"Have you nothing to say to me, sir? I thought you crossed the sea to find out—"

Voice failed her; she looked up imploringly, humbly, at that umpire of her fate, that stranger who was yet her own child.

But Eudeline made no answer. He seemed, indeed, not to hear; his face remained answerless.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PEACE AND WAR.

THE bride is not as the maiden. Charlotte's foster sister had ever been self-possessed and dignified beyond her years. As she now returned from mass, the high white coif and dangling keys at her girdle, symbols of matronly estate, lent new sobriety. With other well-to-do peasants' wives she wore a gold chain and cross, also gold ear-rings, all set off to best advantage by clear rich complexion, plain black dress, and white kerchief. As she advanced, moving slowly and statelily after the manner of her countrywomen, she suggested the ideal villageoise. Health and beauty, chastened gravity of look and carriage here attained the acme.

But the charming figure was pathetic—what young wife's is not? And to this delicate-minded, sensitive girl wedlock had brought much more than the common experience.

Wifehood, motherhood, must come to her without the usual superabundant compensations. She wore her fetters resignedly, proudly, none, not even her parents, must know how they galled. The supreme disillusion in this case meant her own insufficiency. As well try to force back the flood as to soften the rude nature mated with her own. Here lay the crowning bitterness. As far as Raymond was concerned, the sacrifice had been made in vain.

Immediately behind Isaye and Gillette, figures hardly less comely and dignified than Airelle's, came Eudette, the graceless, the giggler.

"Master, mistress! Sure enough yonder is Judith's minister, as she calls him!" she cried with unseemly guffaw. "That's he! I should know him, with his black coat and white stock anywhere. Oh, my!"

The notion of any one but a Romish priest wearing semi-clerical dress seemed to Eudette supremely comic. She stopped short, holding her sides for laughter.

"Peace, wench! Silence that foolish tongue of thine," Isaye said, with his companions

hastening forward, Gillette adding in an undertone: —

"Bid the stranger to take bite and sup, but not with us, not to sit down to table. Father Patrix might disapprove."

"I think I will go straight home," Airelle said, suddenly stopping short; "you will tell me what the pastor says."

"Nay, that would look unmannerly, girl, and the sermon was short. Your husband and his brothers won't be ready for their dinner just yet," Isaye replied. Gillette, too, had a word to say. Airelle best knew Judith's visitor; she preferred to have her by.

The four approached, Eudeline greeting them on the threshold, stammering cut-and-dry apology. Judith, meanwhile, busied herself over the fire thus hiding her flushed, tearful face.

"My errand is done. I will not any longer intrude," Eudeline went on. "I have told this good woman the result of my visit beyond sea, — a fruitless one, I regret to say, in so far as her hopes and suppositions are concerned. Our relations, therefore, remain precisely what they were. But although I cannot

replace a lost son, I am quite able and willing to fulfil a son's duty. As I was just saying to her, she need no longer toil for daily bread — "

"Come inside, sir. Airelle, offer the pastor the wherewithal to refresh himself."

A few months back Isaye would never have dreamed of thus naming his visitor. Revolution had at least taught the unlettered one useful lesson. The dissident, the heterodox, was a human being, a fellow-citizen, a respectable member of society. Nonconformity no longer placed its professors under a ban.

Hitherto Eudeline had spoken in cold, matter-of-fact tones, never once glancing at Airelle. It had been a relief to think of Judith, to speak of himself with reference to Judith only. But when he once more sat down to that frugal yet hospitable board, when once more Airelle moved about ministering to him, all the old enchantment came back. He answered Isaye's pertinent questions automatically; he ate and drank, yet all the while was in a dream. More impossible than ever seemed the news he had just heard. Was Airelle really a wife, and the wife of Raymond?

Airelle moved about, thankful to be busy, not venturing to glance at the stranger. Gone for ever those earnest talks across the table, those confidences about Revolution and Charlotte! But perhaps it was good to see him once more.

"So you feel quite sure that our Judith is deluded," Isaye said, first looking round to assure himself that she was not by. "Old folks do sometimes harbour strange fancies, and brooding overmuch may have muddled the poor soul's brain. You see, sir, she has never been exactly one of us. From the beginning we never talked of her past life or her religion. Our curé, Father Patrix, would joke with her on the subject; that was all. Perhaps she was thinking of these things all the time."

"Her hallucination, so I feel bound to regard it, is conceivable."

Eudeline replied: "The facts are as I first represented them to you; I have discovered nothing at variance with these. As I just said, however, if no longer able to work, let her be at my charge, not yours."

Isaye smiled and glanced at his wife.

"Humph!" cried the worthy peasant. "Judith would like to hear you say that, I'll warrant! She is as able-bodied as any one in the place, aye, and likely to be so for years to come!"

"And she has saved up a few Louis d'or," Gillette put in proudly. The visit of prying taxgatherer royal, seigneurial, municipal, was already a thing of the past. The thrifty dared boast of his stockingful.

"We Protestants are pulling ourselves together," Eudeline went on; he also proud in turn. "You will soon see churches rebuilt, schools opened, orphanages and hospitals founded. If only—" then he paused.

"You have doubtless the last news from Paris. Things look dark?" asked Isaye.

"I cannot exactly say that. If only good ultimately surmount the evil were the words on my lips."

Carried away by interest in his subject, forgetful for the moment of Airelle's wedding ring, Judith's despair, the blankness of his own future, he continued:—

"Our leaders are so young, so hot-headed, so inexperienced! And the task before them

of government so difficult, so immense! How noble, how stirring this newly awakened ardour and hitherto unknown sentiment, called patriotism! yet I tremble before it."

His features glowed, his eyes sought Airelle's with sudden animation.

"That word 'patriotism' recalls part of my errand to you," he said, addressing her for the first time. "Let me talk of your Charlotte."

The mere name electrified his hearers.

"You have seen our Charlotte?" cried the three in a breath.

Airelle dropped on to the bench near him, hearkening breathlessly. Gillette, with hands on her sides, uttered ejaculations of pleasure. Isaye, who had before risen to go reseated himself.

"I delivered your letter into her own hands," Eudeline continued, still looking at Airelle, feeling sure that he might so far reveal confidences.

"Yes, yes, our daughter knew that you were going that way and was minded to save Charlotte the postage. We understand. Pray go on, sir," Gillette put in, feverishly impatient. Some women, perhaps many, are mothers

twice over, clinging with hardly less fondness to nurslings than to the fruit of their womb.

Eudeline did not hurry over his story, his listeners drinking in every word, alternately laughing and wiping away a happy tear.

"I see, I hear her as I listen!" Airelle said; "my joyous, yet so thoughtful Charlotte!"

"I can fancy her giving away the apples," Gillette put in. "The monkey, ever giving, giving, her last sou to the hungry, her last frock to the naked. Ah, mother in Heaven! grant that she may marry a prudent, sparing husband!"

Isaye smiled and shook his head.

"I know you, little Charlotte!" he murmured. "Figs must grow on thistles, barefoot brats spout like Solomon to please you. Well, well, may good come of it all. I must look after the pigs."

He went out of doors. Gillette followed him in search of eggs; during the last few days her hens had begun to lay. Airelle and the pastor were left alone.

They did not want to talk of each other. Each had a world to say, but such confidences must wait, most probably for ever. Eudeline's

love, hallowed as it was by a feeling of despair, lifted him high, the self that demands mere personal sympathy.

In one sense they were separated. Henceforth, although being neighbours, their paths lay wide apart. But one theme might occupy them to-day, one tie knit them on the morrow. Of Charlotte, of mother-country — the two subjects seemed one — they could freely talk, and such interests would form a bond of union in the future.

"You did not exaggerate your foster sister's beauty and spirit," Eudeline went on; "but her patriotism, her daring, these are not to be suggested. And I tremble, I tremble."

"You are thinking of what happened during the riots at Caen, of the way in which she risked her life then," Airelle said, one hand toying with a spoon on the table, the other supporting her downcast head. "She would do the same to-morrow, and why not?" She spoke calmly and without emphasis; the thought seemed to have come as a matter of course. And why not? Is life so precious, so enviable? was Airelle's meaning. It flashed upon Eudeline that all this time he

had been dwelling on his own life rather than hers; perhaps unconsciously, but unmistakably, the secret of an outraged heart and a bruised spirit was now divulged. To this girl marriage had proved then the one unendurable woman's lot, bringing closest ties without respect and affection, thraldom of a higher nature to a lower?

But he dared not seem to draw a personal inference; he could only speak of Charlotte. "And why not, say you? Yet think how precious are some lives! Far be it from me to blame your foster sister's heroism during the riots; I trust, however, that she will temper her courage with prudence. We know not what the morrow may have in store for us; opportunities of displaying one's patriotism are sure to arrive. The women of France, such women as your Charlotte, will doubtless be called upon to play a memorable part." He looked at his passionless listener fixedly.

"Life is never more valuable," he went on, "than in times such as these, when the magnanimous and single-minded are ready to throw it away or regard it as a burden."

A ringing note of cheer and uplifting was

on his lips when a tall, unsteady figure darkened the doorway.

"Come home, wife, will you?" said a gruff voice.

Raymond, for it was he, now lurched forward, laying a heavy hand on his wife's shoulder.

No habitual drunkard was the present head of the Avril family, but to himself as to Airelle marriage had brought disenchantment. This cold, gentle creature was far from being a toy he could play with at will. He might break her heart; he could not compel submissiveness.

Thus the cabaret often drew him from home, and he would return with coarse jest, swaggering gait and flaming cheeks.

Airelle never stirred. She said very quietly: "I will follow you in a few minutes. The pastor is telling me of my foster sister, of our Charlotte," she replied.

Glancing up, Raymond recognized the stranger who had cheated him — so he now put it — of the soldier's musket some months back. Eudeline's dress, too, irritated. What business had a bourgeois, above all a Protestant minister, here?

"Will you come home?" he repeated. This time he spoke with attitude so menacing that Eudeline was frightened on Airelle's account. Involuntarily, not giving himself time to think, he jumped to his feet and placed himself between the pair.

The tremendous arm dropped like a mallet, but on his own head, forcing him backward, the sharp edge of the buffet inflicting a terrible wound.

Gillette and Judith, summoned by Airelle's cry, found Eudeline on the ground, the kitchen floor showing a stream of blood.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE UNMISTAKABLE VOICE.

WHEN Eudeline recovered self-consciousness, it was with an unaccountable feeling of safety and comfort. Towards dawn next day he unclosed his heavy lids, vaguely recalling the events of the last twenty-four hours. His night had been very restless, fits of fever and delirium alternating with intervals of semi-somnolence, dull, heavy pain accompanying the more wakeful moments. At times the sound of his own voice would appear unfamiliar, perception become confused. But from first to last he had felt lulled, soothed, cradled by some unseen presence, some influence impossible to define, equally impossible to withstand.

Lying thus in mental and bodily helplessness, his bandaged head a leaden weight, every limb a cruel burden, he yet smiled to himself, feeling in good rather than evil plight.

For the first time, too, he seemed no longer alone. He was knit to another by some sympathy so deep and pure as to break down the barriers of sex — render unembarrassing a position in itself abnormal. What could have happened to him? How was this feeling to be accounted for? Whither must he turn for an explanation?

He recalled tender, half-timid utterances, caresses acting as a charm against pain, from time to time even a kiss dropped upon cheek or brow.

He was mindful, too, of services that seemed fairylike, miraculous in their invisibility. Did he thirst, a cool draught was immediately held to his lips; did he faint for food, straightway warm, fortifying liquid was poured down his throat. These and twenty kindred ministrations were performed unbidden and in silence. And by the feeble hempen torch of the lantern he discerned no one — no one but Judith. From time to time the old dairywoman was just visible, now squatted on a low stool by the wall, now moving about noiselessly. As the day dawned the mysterious presence vanished, but Judith was still there, her homely figure in keeping with the place.

Come to himself, Eudeline could understand why his sick-chamber was a grange, and why even these large-minded, large-hearted peasants had carried him out of doors. Such care as was necessary and incumbent upon Christian folk to bestow, they would willingly accord. To harbour a Calvinist, a schismatic preacher, under their own roof was wholly another matter. The accommodation might have been worse. Some woman's hand had swept clean the threshing-floor, blocked up apertures, made a curtain of tarpaulin. The bed on which he lay — Judith's bed, brought from her alcove — was placed on a trestle; beside it, on a reversed washing tub, stood Gillette's home-made remedies and cordials. As the gray of dawn changed to warm, mild sunshine and the door was partly opened for the sake of light and air, one or two hens crept in pecking up the crumbs; otherwise patient and nurse were left undisturbed. Farming business had now begun both indoors and out. Eudeline saw that he was entrusted to Judith's care.

But his angelic visitant of the night, that soothing voice, that mute caress, that healing, ineffable tenderness, — where were these? If

he needed anything, Judith, without appearing to watch him, anticipated his slightest wish. The service at an end, she effaced herself completely; bent over some rude sewing, she seemed to ignore his very presence.

"Was some one here just now?" he asked at last.

He felt ashamed of himself for putting the question. Judith looked up, apparently hurt, as if convicted of inadequacy.

"Do you want any of the others?" she asked in turn.

He replied with a shake of the head, again lapsing into silence. The humility and devotion of this poor lonely woman touched him. He wanted to say something consolatory to her, something that might atone for the rebuff of yesterday, but must wait a little. His nerves were unstrung; he felt that the least agitation might entail delirium. A day or two of calm and all would be easy.

By and by Gillette came in, bringing a skillet of warm bread and milk.

"Go indoors, Judith; the soup is ready," she said not unkindly but with a preoccu-

pied, anxious look. "Meantime I will attend to the stranger."

Gillette was, above all things, motherly. Motherliness was her characteristic; yet, as she now served the sick man, her manner seemed brusque to roughness. How much gentler had been Judith's movements! And his unseen ministrant of the night! Then feebleness, prostration, even pain itself were compensated for, — not too dearly purchased by the love that sought to alleviate.

"Eat, sir, eat!" Gillette urged, in tones of good-natured but over-hasty persuasion. "You don't want, I am sure, to be lying here till Easter."

"No, indeed; neither on your account nor on my own," Eudeline replied. He did not venture upon an apology or word of thanks. He must tell her all that was in his mind later, as soon as thoughts became clear and nerves could be relied upon. The slightest agitation now, the mere notion of mental effort, made his brain reel.

That mild sunshiny spring day passed, as sick men's days should, in absolute quiet and uniformity. Gillette came once or twice in

order to dress his wound. Skilled leech, herbalist, and apothecary, she had yet hesitated as to tending this stranger. But for his heterodoxy she would have fetched a nun from the neighbouring convent. Even to her own simple mind the Huguenot pastor seemed apart from other men. She was in duty bound to act the part of Good Samaritan; the obligation, nevertheless, provoked scruples. Was she well within the pale of duty and safe from priestly censure?

Eudeline always felt relieved when the good woman left him. If Judith's ministrations differed from those of his nightly visitor, hardly less differed Gillette's from her own. The voice of his hostess sounded harsh by comparison with Judith's low, almost tremulous tones. Gillette's initiative disturbed, irritated, whilst Judith's very self-effacement soothed. When he needed her she was by; at other times she contrived to let him feel alone.

Once or twice during the day Isaye came, but for a minute only, to nod and put enquiries from the threshold. The worthy farmer's face wore a look of brooding care, and Eudeline understood that he was here invol-

untarily responsible. Eudette, too, appeared from time to time in the doorway, there holding her sides, gaping as at a peep-show. No one else! He fancied that he heard Airelle's voice, but refrained from any allusion to her or to the events of the day before. There was still the dull pain of his wound, the confusion of thought, the leaden-like heaviness of limb. If he drowsed, the sleep induced by Gillette's potions was deep and unrestful.

Twilight came welcomely. He felt so certain then of quiet slumber and peaceful dreams, of indescribably soothing influences as before!

Had indeed Airelle ministered to him, snatching such opportunity of love and service, brief interval that should compensate for lifelong separation? Would she, angelic-like, steal to his bedside, caring for him in his hour of pain and helplessness?

As Judith made ready his strange sick-chamber, he could not help asking:—

"Do you a second time keep watch?"

Came Judith's answer:—

"Who else should?" Eudeline feeling re-

proved and humiliated. Who else indeed? Was he not a stranger within these gates? twice an alien under such a roof? He murmured inarticulate thanks, for Judith also reserving his thanks. Long indeed seemed that night of semi-convalescence to Eudeline, yet not too long! He soon fell into a short, comfortable sleep, waking up to the same mysterious influences. His mind was gradually growing clear, but between drowse and drowse occurred short spells of semi-consciousness. There he lay, neither asleep nor awake, sweetly dreaming, cradled by silent, immeasurable love! In these night watches came the same soft murmurs of endearment, the same cool, healing touches, the same ineffable kiss. Every fresh sign of that unseen, shadowy presence thrilled and intoxicated him, yet without passion — that is to say, the passion of a man for her he would call his own. It was rather worship that he felt, a sentiment free from fleshly taint. An angelic visitant was hovering about him, some spirit purified by sorrow, made diviner by suffering. The night seemed interminable in its manifold, soothing experiences.

When at last day broke his heavenly ministrant was gone; only Judith's homely figure now kept him company. As he glanced round he saw that, worn out by her long watching, she drowsed on the milking-stool, her head on her knees.

Eudeline's heart yearned to his aged fellow Protestant then; her pathetic story and sad illusion moved his deepest pity. How could he repay these services, brighten her declining years, make up for an unsatisfied craving? Alas! he said to himself, a stranger cannot offer the affection of a son, but she shall shelter, care, support have at my hands.

The day dawned cheerily, and to a sick man the sense of returning vigour is ever exhilarating. When Judith began to stir she found her patient more than half his old self. His voice was firm, his eye bright, his skin moist and cool.

"You and the good housewife yonder between you have soon set me on my legs again," he began. "What say you, if some one hereabouts would undertake to drive me, might I not get to the town to-day?"

Judith seemed affronted at the bare suggestion.

"There are no sedan chairs in these parts, as you know well enough," she answered huffishly, "and the tumbril would just shake you to pieces. Anyhow, hear what the master has to say."

Meekly Eudeline submitted. Were this good soul really his mother, she could not be more caressingly, adorably tyrannical, he thought.

Anxious to humour her, yet longing to repeat the question of yesterday, he said:—

"I am really beginning to feel like myself."

"You have not begun to look so," was the testy reply. "I will just run indoors and borrow the mistress's hand mirror; you will then see what a scarecrow you are."

Eudeline smiled and let her have her way. As yet the looking-glass was a comparative rarity in peasant homes; but Gillette did possess such a treasure, two inches square, framed in black wood and dull of surface. Triumphantly Judith held it before him.

"You are right, good mother; for days to

come I shall look like a drunken blackguard who has got his deserts, but indeed I must not stay a moment longer than is absolutely necessary. I ought to hasten off, both on my own account and that of your kind folks here."

Judith busied herself about the chamber, muttering to herself impatiently. His first duty was to recover, she said, if not in words yet plainly enough.

"There is one thing I want to know," he began, then stopped short and hesitated. How could he put the delicate question without hurting her feelings?

"Time enough for that and everything else to-morrow," she replied in the same curt, almost snappish manner. "You may be a scarecrow to look at, but not like to die. No need for such hurry-skurry."

Again he smiled; the good old woman's perversity amused him, and he fancied he could divine her thoughts. She was jealous of that unseen minister, that ineffable presence, whose tenderness to him had been as a revelation. But suspense could be endured no longer.

"Some one was certainly with you or in your place last night?"

Judith glanced up, then turning her back, squatted down on her milking-stool, and, as he imagined, busy with her sewing.

"You were dreaming," she replied, in a low, half-stifled voice, evidently speaking with her thread in her mouth.

"If indeed I dreamed, the vision was heavenly," he went on. He could no longer help himself; the truth must out. The fond, foolish confidence he accorded to the only listener within reach. "Was it—"

Again he stopped short. Airelle's name must not pass his lips.

"Some one was near me; I felt soothed and comforted in some mysterious way. You know my history. Care I have had, kindness unspeakable, but not love. For the first time in my life, as I lay here, I understood what it was to be loved—"

Judith's coarse needlework fell to the ground; her head sank on her breast. On Eudeline's ears fell an indescribable cry.

"Did I not tell you that I was your mother?" she sobbed out, her self-control at

an end. "The King's sign manual, the baptismal register may give you other parentage. A thousand warrants, not all the parchment in the country, could deceive a mother's heart!"

Still keeping her humble posture, not venturing on a caress she went on:—

"Did I not love you nine months ere you were born, like Elizabeth of old rejoice when my babe leaped in the womb? The pain of travail was nothing; love made it welcome. And when you came back last year, a man shapen after your father's mould, living image of him to whom I gave my maiden troth, could all the documents in the world deceive me then? Never fear that I will stand in the way of your advancement, sir—"

She gave a little sob of ecstatic self-congratulation.

"For two nights I have had my babe back again. His head rested on my bosom, I hushed him to sleep with unforgotten lullabies, I kissed him as often as I pleased. And you never knew, you never so much as guessed?"

Eudeline could not speak. Mistaking the cause of his dumbfoundedness, Judith jumped

up, smoothed her apron, readjusted her coif, and seized her broom.

"You will just go your own way, as if nothing had happened," she said, in her usual curt, matter-of-fact tones, sweeping desperately as she spoke. "I am well enough here; I'll stay with my cows. I don't want to be a millstone about your neck, to shame you in the eyes of the bourgeois folk. But keep an eye upon me, lad; I am old, old. And when I am laid in my coffin, see that I have Protestant burial—"

She now spoke in short, hurried utterances, with difficulty keeping back the rising sobs.

"Read the service of our church over me yourself. I think I see you doing it in your black robe, the living image of your dead father. But no need to own me even then, unless you like; although under the turf I shall know that it was my son—"

The brooming went on vigorously as ever, but the voice broke down. Nor had Eudeline a word at command. He could only beckon the homely yet dignified figure towards him, and fold her to his breast. No way he saw out of the maze; the love was not to be

withstood. In spite of himself he belonged to Judith, to a mother!

"There, there, poppet," she said, standing proudly over him, laughing and crying, fondling his locks as if he had been her curly-polled weanling of thirty odd years before. "There, there, my lamb, don't take on. 'Tis all one to me now. I'll stay with my cows."

CHAPTER XXV.

ANGELS OF PEACE AND DISCORD.

JUST then a very different scene was taking place in the Delle of the Bog, for generations the homestead of the Avril family.

A rough farm apprentice, scullion, plough-woman, stock-woman, anything and everything by turn, aided Airelle in her more irksome labours. On the young mistress devolved the duty of preparing and serving meals, mending clothes, and keeping the house in order.

With an air of quiet, dignified resignation, — shared, alas, by how many other village matrons of the finer sort! — she now moved from skillet to skillet on the long bare table, ladling out the morning soup.

Graceful as was every contour and movement of that tall, strong figure, delicate and tender as was the expression of those noble features, Airelle yet hardly looked out of place. All the characteristics of the Norman peasant

were here. The pathos of the picture lay not in rude surroundings, not in homely task, not in the lot that came naturally. This woman's heart would never be broken by wayward, sentimental aspirations; her spirit would never be crushed by mere brutalities.

Airelle's deep, unobtrusive sadness arose rather from a sense of humiliation, of her own inadequacy. She was constantly saying to herself that other women might have softened Raymond's intractable nature. There are some antipathies impossible to surmount; she could not feign tolerance or indifference. Her passive disapproval had created an atmosphere in which he could not breathe. He was being forced into hatred, perhaps, against his will, certainly against her own better nature. Thus she chid herself.

The three brothers entered one by one, and for a few minutes only the clattering of wooden spoons broke the stillness. Meantime Airelle remained standing. As each bowl was emptied she moved to the fire, replenishing from the heavy copper vessel. She did not eat herself, the women here as a rule taking their soup when the men had done.

On a sudden Raymond glanced at the statuesque figure by the fire.

"How is your mock parson?" he asked sneeringly.

Airelle moved away and busied herself with driving out some stray hens. The question was repeated and in tones still more insulting. Determined to remain unprovocative, feigning naturalness, she replied: —

"You forget the time of day. I have as yet seen no one from my father's."

"The fellow caught it then and he'll catch it again if he comes in my way," laughed Raymond, Lambert echoing the coarse guffaw, Elie eyeing his sister-in-law with a look of sympathy. "We've black-robed gentry enough without make-believes sneaking in at the back door, running after our wives."

Airelle glanced at the two younger men with a look of appeal. Will you let your brother's wife be thus treated? her face said.

"Come, come," Elie began, speaking somewhat timidly, for he stood in traditional awe of the firstborn; "leave the Huguenot alone."

"I will teach you to leave me alone if you

say any more," Raymond cried angrily, but Airelle's glance had given Elie courage.

Moreover, although the other's junior by several years, he was already his match in thews and muscles. And who can say? Perhaps other arguments were at hand. Revolution was teaching the least instructed one immense, one priceless lesson, namely, the inviolability of the person, the equality of every human unit before the law.

Elie quietly ladled his soup.

"What good comes of all this bullying?" he said. "You know well enough it would not be so if our father were alive. I've the greatest mind in the world to go a-soldiering."

"Humph! we could spare you," Raymond muttered, "though Airelle yonder would, I dare say, cry her eyes out."

Still Airelle controlled herself. The taunt was not for herself but for others to rebut.

Elie sprang from his seat.

"By the Virgin and saints!" he shouted, "I'll have done with this accursed existence. But our sister there — why don't you speak out like a man, Lambert? — Airelle yonder shall not endure your conduct any longer.

This very day neighbour Isaye shall know what any other woman would have blurted out long ago. And before to-night I shall be miles away—"

Still Airelle was silent, but her parted lips and filling eyes did not escape Raymond's notice. Jealous passion now fixed upon his younger brother. He saw the affection and trustfulness existing between the pair and meted out his measure of hate in proportion. Flinging down his spoon, noisily pushing away his bowl, he drew something from his left hand; a second later and the glittering bawble flashed across the room. Nor did Raymond miss his mark. Airelle pressed her brow with a cry of pain.

"Take back my marriage ring!" he thundered forth. "What else has it been but a curse to both of us? The priest had better think twice before again sending a man to perdition. You never uttered the thought, I have seen it in your meek face: in your eyes I remain the anathematized, the lost—"

"Raymond—"

"Hear what I have to say," he continued in the same loud, fierce tones. "Had Father

Patrix left us both alone from the first, had he never made a leper, a Cagot, an accursed one of me in the eyes of the neighbours, had he never forced you into the hateful bargain, all would have been different. I loved you, girl, and you know it. But love is easier conquered than hate! I should have consoled myself elsewhere. As it is, better a thousand times follow Tricolour and drum, go short of food, fight in rags and tatters, bivouac afield, march a dozen leagues a day in the broiling sun than be tied to a woman who loathes me—"

"Will you not listen a moment?" Airelle asked, with rising tears, her hand still pressing her scarred, swollen temple.

"Say what you have to say to *him*," was the rough answer. "From henceforth Elie is master here. If a shrew is not to my taste, still less so is an angel. Come, Lambert, they are recruiting to-day at Bayeux. Let us be off!"

A couple of hours later, unwonted silence reigned throughout the Delle of the Bog. The ploughwoman by Elie's side was turning up the furrow. Airelle, about her house-

hold tasks, moved as one in a dream. What would her parents say? How would they counsel? One thought, and one only, consoled in so far as Raymond was concerned. This union had been literally forced upon her; here she was the first victim.

"You must take a wife, dear Elie," she said, when her brother-in-law came home to dinner. "I will gladly make way for the new mistress. My parents sorely need my help now."

"No wife for me, I thank you kindly," the young man answered, colouring and dropping his eyelids. The glisten of a tear and the trembling of his lips completed the story. "Since I could not have the only one I cared for," he added.

"Oh, Elie!" Airelle cried, ignoring her own part in his little tragedy, only mindful of the suggested dreariness. "So young, and you can speak thus? Liking,"—the word 'fancy' was on her lips; she substituted one less offensive,—"even deep affection happily is not limited. Believe it, my brother, the truest wisdom, the bravest part is to choose happiness, even seek it out, not turn our backs frowningly as upon a foe."

"You make it appear so; but what really comes to pass, — the things before us, — how different are they to words!" Elie replied, a moment later looking up to add, "However, I'll marry by and by; do anything, of course, to please you."

Isaye and Gillette said little when learning the news. For the first time in their lives they refrained from consulting Father Patrix. Perhaps, too, their silence had something to do with self-reproach. Was not this marriage of their own making, no less than of the confessor's? Yes, Airelle was right. Elie must take a wife, and become head of the family. Airelle's place was now in her old home.

"We'll look out for a hard-working, well-behaved girl for you," Isaye said, "a girl with a few livres and perhaps a plot of land; and Elie, lad, though Airelle comes back to us, I remain your father-in-law, remember that, to help out of doors or in, with my arm as well as my tongue. You may need a word of advice sometimes; twenty-two is not fifty, you know. Years teach the foolishest!"

It was not till after Eudeline's departure that Airelle ventured home; final return was

to be made later. Supreme joy, as supreme desolation, humiliates some natures. There was no bitterness in Judith's heart towards Airelle now, although no one could better read her darling's and that of one other! She could fathom the depth of Eudeline's feeling for Airelle, even contrast it with his studied affectionateness towards herself, but no longer with jealous pang. She wanted the right, the title, to love him — that was all. She never expected equal measure of love in return. Did not one, he of the wisest, say that this should be our attitude to the Eternal?

Between really deep natures can never exist easy, unfettered confidence about the topic nearest their hearts. Thus was it with Judith and Airelle after that momentous day of union on the one side, severance on the other; the pair kissed, smiled at each other through their tears. Then Judith broke out with a homely simile.

"Does not a hen know her own chick, sirrah? Jean Eudeline may leave me to-morrow, and for good, if he likes. But he is mine and he knows it," she added triumphantly.

Airelle stooped down to put one arm around the old dairywoman's neck.

"And I am yours and you know it," she said. "In any case, you will never be left alone."

"And I shall have Christian burial though I am a Huguenot, and a minister in his robes, he my own son, to read the service over me. Would I could die to-morrow, if, being dead, I could see it all!" Judith cried; then hastened away, too agitated to say more.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ELUCIDATIONS.

OUTWARDLY unemotional had been the parting between mother and son.

"Times are troubled," Judith said. "Raymond and his brother are gone a-soldiering, and our Airelle is soon coming back to us, and to stay. The good folks yonder have enough to think about, just now."

"Airelle is coming home to stay?" began Eudeline.

Then he broke off with a blush. What mattered such changes to him? his face said.

Passion was stifled, reasoned away by holier feeling; fruitless yearnings, unmanly repining, blown to the four winds. Ambition, too, had received a rude, to his thinking, an admonitory, shock.

The dazzling prospect of political life in Paris no longer beckoned. Ideals were changed. Yes; struggle against the convic-

tion as he might, it was too strong for him. He was indeed a humble pastor's son, born to the career of sire, grandsire, and many an Eudeline besides. That magnetic drawing towards the ministry, hitherto so incomprehensible, now became clear as day. Preaching, no less than Protestantism, was in the blood, hereditary as form, voice, feature. Well, a man might be born to ignobler destinies! As during convalescence he lay watching Judith's homely, benign figure, he pictured to himself some village church, parsonage and school, little centre of peace and spiritual life amid prevailing turmoil, his simple ministrations affording light in a dark place, mild, steady ray unquenchable by Revolutionary storm.

"Mother, my own mother," he would say, from time to time, less for his own satisfaction than for Judith's.

And Judith, rendered curt and unsentimental by overjoy, made invariable answer, —

"There, there, darling, I told you so; but don't take on."

For her sake, therefore, for the sake of that love so passionate yet so self-effacing, he had renounced ambition. He should never now

be one with the makers of history, he should have no part in the building up of national liberties. For other men the tribune, the plaudits or hisses of the crowd, the proud yet awful responsibility of signing decrees. Not in such feverish whirl could he unlearn or master his ill-starred love. He must, perhaps, still hear of her, even see her — a joy he willed and yet willed not. His modest, narrow future would resemble her own. Splendid or perhaps tragic fortunes would never awaken her tears of pride or sorrow. He belonged to Judith. Her clinging devotion he was unable to return, but he could compensate for the martyrdom of years, long-drawn-out seasons of broken-heartedness and desolation. And as he thought of all that she had endured, he felt ready to fall on his knees and kiss the hem of her humble garment. Sheer unselfish thankfulness for Judith's sake made him in turn tender and magnanimous. Hardly was he set on his feet again when he received a summons from Havre. And once more he sat with his wealthy patron, the shipbuilder, in solemn conclave, before their eyes the same glorious

scene: glassy, sunlit sea, crowded port, bristling merchantmen, white villas dotting green hills; beyond, the dazzling cliffs of Ingonville and broad blue Seine — scenes of beauty, scenes of every day unchanged by Revolution!

The worthy Havrais greeted him with the same air of paternal benevolence, and if to-day unapologetic, yet not wholly free from an air of self-reproach. The semi-abjuration of a prosperous — otherwise irreproachable — life ever weighed upon his mind.

His kindly honest face, as before, took a deeper glow, and his voice manifested a slight tremor as he began: —

"I have already mentioned to you certain circumstances in my past career to which I cannot even now refer without qualms of conscience. True that — out with the ugly word — by feigned apostasy, I was enabled to save many fellow-Protestants from death, ruin, or exile; but the truth remains, it faces me every day. Your father and men of his stamp chose the better part."

His host's opening sentence seemed to escape Eudeline's notice. When he spoke it

was not Judith's son, not the minister of religion, rather a man of the world, a thinker, who answered him.

"Why such regrets? Religious intolerance of necessity makes men visionaries or actors — to put the matter coarsely, fools or hypocrites. Is not martyrdom a species of folly?"

He was thinking of Judith's life, widowed, made childless, penniless, and for what? A dogma of human framing. Every day his Protestantism was broadening; he felt himself drawn nearer and nearer to the new teachers who hazarded the opinion — we know nothing of these things, the life beyond, the ultimate destiny of mankind. Wherefore, then, having attained intellectual maturity with our hands, prepare and adjust leading strings? "I, for one, do not blame you," he added.

The shipbuilder pressed his friend's hand without looking convinced. Then he rose and, unlocking a drawer of his heavy oaken escritoire, brought out a roll of yellow documents.

"I just now laid emphasis on two words. Your father, I said, did not observe it. When I spoke thus, I referred to the Jean Eudeline,

pastor, who was Judith's husband. You are indeed son of these two, coming of no aristocratic or brilliant stock, but of one to glory in nevertheless, a race of dauntless men and women who went to the branding post, the rack, aye, the stake, as to a festival."

Once more the kindly merchant blushed and sighed. He enjoyed wealth, universal respect, the gratitude of thousands, a conscience spotless on other counts; but he had let go the chance of proving his constancy in matters of faith, and now it was too late! The ban was removed from nonconformity in France; he could safely profess his Protestantism. In these fits of self-reproach he almost wished himself a born Romanist, thus escaping such grievous temptation. Eudeline still listened coldly. Further disclosures little mattered. He was Judith's son, that he knew right well. The rest seemed of no account.

"On the occasion of your first visit," continued the merchant, "I laid before you proofs of the kidnapping of Protestant children of royal warrant. As you well know, until the constitution of the National Assembly, that is to say, until a year ago, registry of births,

marriages, and decease in country places were entirely under clerical control. The consecration of baptism, bridals, and committal to the earth, could only be performed by the orthodox priesthood. Think a moment of the confusion thereby arising! The Protestant pastors did their very utmost to remedy such a state of things, a few here and there at hourly risk of imprisonment and death remaining on French soil. They christened, united in wedlock, buried secretly, keeping their own registers. When no pastor could be had, many preferred to dispense with ritual altogether. Hundreds were named, wedded, laid to rest without religious ceremonial. To-day, under the new régime, registers alike authorized and informal, are being thoroughly investigated, with one result that directly concerns yourself. The child buried as son of Jean Eudeline, pastor, thirty and odd years ago, was certainly of that name, a common Huguenot name, but of wholly different family and stock — what trifles, forsooth, in the eyes of would-be exterminators of heresy! Kidnapped children were always consigned to Catholic guardians, and sent as far as possible from their homes. An

orphan, as it was given out, of opulent, bourgeois parents, you were handed over by virtue of rich bribes to kinsfolks in England. The child left behind was buried and mourned in your place."

Eudeline put out his hand for the papers, but almost indifferently. The unravelling of the mystery hardly interested him now.

"These documents are your own. Keep them," said the other kindly. "You will see that not only was there error here but deliberate mystification and wilful perjury. The hated stock of the pastor was to be rooted out; your birthright, inherited name of martyr, was a standing menace to our persecutors. So the two children were turned into changelings, and you were handed over to exiled friends in England, there, as it was hoped, to forego your very nationality."

Not so much as unfolding the packet, Eudeline thanked his host, and pocketed the roll.

"There is at least one person who will set store by your gift; in that light I regard this piece of news," he said. "I allude, of course, to my mother."

The Havrais patted him encouragingly on the shoulder.

"Nay, who knows? To others as yet unborn, the certificate of your birthright may prove even more precious. Let me stand godfather to your firstborn. And now, for the matter of more moment to your fellow-citizens than that just discussed, your yea or nay about Paris and our newspapers."

But Eudeline made briefest possible reply in the negative, his old friend not once striving to argue or persuade.

"Ah! those Huguenots, those Huguenots," he murmured to himself when left alone. "As well put cold iron under hammer, cold copper into the casting mould, as try to reason them out of a fixed purpose."

And once more a shadow of self-reproach stole over his honest, benignant features. The prosperous merchant, foremost citizen of foremost seaport, even brushed away a tear as he finished his sentence.

"And there are changelings and changelings. I, too, came of martyr's stock, but destiny made a renegade of me, one of his own free will rendered alien to kith and kin."

Alas! the bitterness of the Revocation lay not all with those chronicled in history. Perhaps the cruelest tragedy were to be found in the lives of those who made a semblance of apostasy!

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN ANNIVERSARY.

How majestic looked the capital of the Cotentin that July morning, just four years after Airelle's journey home!

From end to end the noble panorama was gradually flooded with sunshine, the towers of Queen Matilda, the spires of Duke William catching earliest ray, next the glorious pinnacle of St. Pierre and sombre pile of St. Jean, by degrees roof after roof turning from gray to gold. Beyond donjon, river, and prairies stretched the landscape, — true Norman landscape, — yellow corn falling beneath the sickle, apple orchards about walled-in homesteads, cattle browsing by running brooks. And on this sparkling, dewy, bird-singing morning the peasants were afield as usual; townsfolk took down their shutters and heaped their open stalls with tempting wares; punctually as of old the diligence started for

Paris. Revolution had reached its most tragic stage. The Terror reigned in Paris. In the person of a single tyrant the Evil Genius of France, of humanity, seemed incarnate. But although tyranny and fanaticism had got the upper hand, although the proscriptions of a modern Scylla were deluging France with blood, paralyzing her best and bravest, the humdrum life of every day went on as usual. Babes were born, youths and maidens were joined in wedlock, people died in their beds as before. Merchants bought and sold, notaries drew up marriage contracts and made wills, gentlefolks paid visits, valets and waiting-maids let themselves out on hire. The diligence never lacked passengers or goods and was an object of more than common interest just now, linking as it did the curious outside world with the capital.

Even here it was so. The townsfolk were feverishly anxious, rich and poor, foremost and lowly, trembling for their guests, — the noble Girondins here at bay, the very bloodhound of proscription near their throats.

As the day wore on, idlers gathered round the heavy old berline; the little square behind

St. Pierre grew animated; passengers strolled up one by one; porters came with bales; folks chattered. A portly grazier from Carentan, a hardware merchant of the city, a lady teacher of the harpsichord, two milliners, a hairdresser's apprentice and a notary formed little groups. Standing by, were friends come to take leave.

There was no extra impressiveness about these adieux, only a little extra excitement. The younger folks promised to send full particulars of their sight-seeing in Paris. The grazier's little girl clung to his long coat lappets, reiterating the entreaty, "A doll, a *dressed* doll from the Palais Royal! Do you hear, dear little papa?" The milliners, looking very attractive in their Indian muslins and gipsy hats tied under the chin, laughingly speculated concerning the fashions they should bring back. Only here and there the grave state of public affairs both in the capital and near home was hinted at by look or gesture. Folks felt bound to be gay even if their hearts were heavy.

A little apart from the rest stood a beautiful young country woman, wearing the high white

coif of the Bessin and plain black Sunday gown. There was a quiet dignity about this pensive statuesque figure that would have marked her from the rest of her sex elsewhere. Here, in so far as carriage and features went, she was a type. No comelier, gracefuller women to be found throughout France than those of Upper Normandy. She had a basket in one hand and at her feet a package of shop goods, but stood back evidently awaiting some other conveyance, herself not bound for Paris.

From time to time she glanced to the right and to the left wistfully, yet resignedly, her face now saddened, now irradiated as if with keen regrets and fondest memories.

Meanwhile, from a gloomy house in the Rue St. Jean had emerged a figure no less gracious and striking. The young bourgeoise, now tripping towards the port home, wore a summer dress of sky-blue cotton, neck and shoulders — as the fashion was — covered with a white muslin kerchief, the sleeves fitting tight, lace falling over the slender wrists. Her beautiful dark hair fell loosely from under the coquettish little half-bonnet, half-cap also of white muslin trimmed with blue ribbons.

Buoyantly, briskly, she hastened on, bound, as passer-by might have thought, for some sunshine holiday. Yet a more heedful observer must have noticed her mental aloofness from present scenes, her deep-seated sobriety and composure, a look, moreover, of concentrated purpose, not only quite unusual in the young, but most rare, even among phenomenal men and women. Youthful as she was, lovely as she was, alike port, expression, and manner inspired a feeling absolutely apart from mere admiration. She looked a stranger in the common, every-day world, an alien spirit thrown among ordinary mortals, one whose destiny separated her from the rest of humanity.

From a burning blue sky, the sun shone down with fierce intensity, but these narrow streets, bordered with lofty houses, ever afforded coolness and shadow. As she hurried along, never once looking back, she chose the less frequented ways, evidently wishing to avoid acquaintances. But, once arrived in front of the post-house, all was glare, bustle, and conspicuousness. Airelle sprang forward, overcome with joy and amazement.

"At last, at last!" she cried, about to fall

upon her friend's neck. Childhood, girlhood, all that was dearest in life, came back again. But something in the other's face chilled her.

"They told me you were away from home. I could not gain admittance," she said, her eyes filling with childlike disillusion. Could it be? Her Charlotte had changed, wished to cast off, disown, her foster sister? A strange, desperate kiss, only one, reassured her.

"I will write. You will understand. But now I must say good bye," was the hurried answer. "The diligence waits."

Airelle held fast the struggling hand, trying to read her face, awestruck by the expression she saw there.

A full quarter of an hour would elapse before departure. Another passenger or two strolled up, cider was handed round, pipes smoked, no one noticed the two figures in the shadow. The pair drew back a little holding each other by the hand.

"You did not tell me of this visit — that you were going to Paris," Airelle said. "I guess the rest. You may deceive others, your foster sister never."

"Well, and what is my errand?" asked the

other, affecting playfulness, although her colour had deepened.

"Softly," murmured Airelle. "Let us draw farther back. None must hear a syllable. Nay," she added, as her companion pointed to the stage-coach, fain to hear no more. "The letter-bags have yet to come. See, the post-boys are still at their breakfast. There is plenty of time—"

"Dearest, my place will be taken—"

"Nonsense! I tell you, the letter-bags are not yet brought. Only listen—"

"But if no one must hear. We are not alone, remember—"

There was no trepidation or misgiving in those quick utterances, only the impatience of a high spirit at interference. Just so good-naturedly might the speaker have brushed away a bee.

"I must be heard and there is plenty of time," Airelle went on, with passionate insistence. "Foster sister, you were never like other girls. I saw, from the first, that you would grow up to be no ordinary woman; you were ever pondering, trying to fathom deep things, to find out why this or that

should be; other folks' wrongs and sorrows hurt you as your own—"

"Dear, the post-bags—"

"There are others to come," Airelle continued, her voice growing more and more earnest. "You shall not lose your place. Only listen. Did the books you read teach you such unselfishness, or your own heart? You were always a mystery to me, Charlotte. When your eyes flashed at the hearing of shameful deeds, they were as swords to smite the evil doer; when wickedness came in your way, your words of rebuke stung even the callous. Again and again have I said to myself, since we parted, four years ago, since these terrible crimes have disgraced our Revolution, France may yet be saved by a woman; the Jeanne d'Arcs are not dead."

"Another time. I *must* go," broke in the listener with a suppressed sob.

"Look at yonder clock, St. Peter's clock. We have yet a good five minutes. Listen, then. Have I not understood your letters of late; do I not know how you have wept for the victims in Paris, and for the great, good men here, the patriots of the Gironde, now

exiled, outlawed, in danger of their lives? Your errand is no mystery to me."

Fascinated in spite of herself, the other now listened almost meekly, her eyes fixed on those of her adoring, adored foster sister; with feverish exultation she drank in the words just before heard so unwillingly.

"You cannot deny it; you are going to Paris; your errand is with the tyrant who reigns there."

"My Airelle, hark! I am called. Heaven keep you! Adieu!"

"A moment — they will give us a moment. You bear a message to the tyrant, the massacrer of our citizens, our patriots. Not as yourself, my own foster sister, a simple girl of Normandy, will you appear before him, but as an advocate of France, our crushed, bleeding, gasping country. Your youth, innocence, and daring will appal him; as in presence of an avenging angel, his black soul will take fright."

For a moment Airelle's listener seemed to forget everything, the postilions blowing their signal for departure, the imperative nod of the driver, the beckoning of fellow-passengers.

She only realized the other's piercing gaze, trying, as she looked into her eyes, to read their inmost meaning. Her own lips were set; she had turned from red to white; her quick breath went and came.

"Go," Airelle said, solemnly, her voice dropped almost to a whisper; "do your mission, gain the blessings of your country people, a name to be placed among the saviours of France."

There was no time for more. With passionate tenderness and a deep-drawn sigh of relief, the traveller threw her arm round her companion's neck, kissed her fondly, wildly, having advanced a step or two, returned for a final, still fonder embrace. Then, dry-eyed, collected, even smiling, never once looking back, she hastened towards the diligence and took her seat.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

It was not till three days later, and by a roundabout way, that Airelle reached the Delle of the Saxon. She had been visiting kinsfolk in remote places, hearing no public news on the road.

As she drove up to the post-house near Lison, she saw that the diligence had just arrived, bringing the latest news-letter from the capital. The arrival of the stage-coach ever attracted a crowd, but on this especial evening all the country folk seemed abroad. Some unusual excitement had emptied every farmhouse, cabin, and cabaret, every workshop of master and apprentice. Amid the bystanders she immediately recognized her own people, father, mother, brother-in-law, and Eudette. But what had happened? They were only a few yards off; they had come expressly to welcome herself, yet all were dumb, motion-

less, paralyzed by some marvellous news. She waved her handkerchief, beckoned, called each by name. None budged an inch.

A thought flashed across Airelle's mind, — was there news of Charlotte, of her sublime mission, the era of proscription and bloodshed brought to a close, France saved by a woman's pleading?

As promptly as was practicable, she contrived to get down unaided, and, without heeding her bundles, hastened forward. Making quick way through the excited crowd, one and all familiar acquaintances turned into strangers by sheer agitation, she caught her mother's hand, uttering her name. But Gillette broke away with almost maniacal violence.

"Charlotte, my little Charlotte!" she wailed.

Airelle turned, for an explanation, to Isaye, Elie, Eudette, — all three were fascinated, literally enchained to the news-letter held by a fourth, some fortunate subscriber to the Paris *Mercury*. And soon the name just before was caught up by the rest, echoed from end to end of the closely-packed throng. Airelle heard her foster sister acclaimed, now

with mad exultation, now with horror and dismay.

Hats were thrown up, handkerchiefs waved, frantic huzzas filled the air. Here and there, some, more easily moved than the others, seemed crazy from pure emotion, whilst far and near folks shouted: —

"The Tyrant has fallen! The Tyrant has fallen!"

One pale-faced woman close to Airelle, with hands raised to heaven, murmured: —

"The Virgin and Saints be praised! France has her Jaels, her Judiths!"

Another, frantic with excitement, dropped on her knees crying wildly: —

"Saint Charlotte, pray for us!"

An impish laugh, in strange contrast with the prevailing agitation, broke upon Airelle's ear. Plucking her young mistress's sleeve, giggling and chuckling as she might have done over a mountebank's trick, Eudette made everything plain.

"Can't you hear what they all say?" she blurted out. "Don't you understand? Marat is dead. It was your Charlotte who did it, and of course — of course — oh my!"

She put both hands to her throat, with hideous mimicry finishing the story.

For a moment Airelle stood stone still, not a cry, not a feature betraying the passion of despair. No angelic messenger, then, had been her Charlotte, no heaven-sent prophetess of just retribution. No softening of the tyrant's heart had prompted that strange journey; instead, a death-blow but too surely dealt?

It is said that those brought suddenly face to face with death in a few seconds review the shifting scenes of their past career. Thus indeed haps it when we are plunged without warning into fathomless sorrow.

As Airelle stood thus, for the nonce turned into a statue, she saw vision after vision. Now linked arm in arm with her adored, high-spirited Charlotte, she roamed the convent pleasure-ground, their topic ever of grave impersonal things; now robed in white, wreathed with myrtle, they knelt together at their first communion, the solemnity knitting them still closer. One picture succeeded the other, all fair, smiling, full of sunny promise, till she came to the last. Close by folks shouted, reiterated each ghastly particular, — how the

dauntless avenger of France, the descendant of her greatest poet, the beautiful daughter of Caen, had stabbed the hideous Marat to the heart; how serenely, as if bound to bridal altar, she had confronted her doom, unmoved alike by the garb of a murderess, the execrations of bystanders, the engine of death.

Suddenly Airelle thought of her mother. Her trembling knees just supported her to Gillette's side. The poor woman had dragged herself a few yards from the crowd and leaning against the wall moaned as one for her firstborn.

"To die so, without holy shrift, — oh, my baby, my Charlotte!"

What other grief could hurt now? Airelle recovered herself from sheer force of despair. Daily life must be lived without even the Charlotte of memory, of dreams. She could not weep; she was in that mood when the desperate can smile at their own composure.

"To be cut off from the community of saints, no prayers for her soul of any good, no masses of use to help her out of purgatory —"

"She but sacrificed herself for France," Airelle said very gently.

"Has France sucked these breasts, coo'd and capered in my arms?" was Gillette's fierce retort. For the moment horror made a fury of the most placable matron in the Bessin.

Just then Isaye came up with a horror-stricken but composed face.

"Take your mother home," he said in an undertone; then, glancing round suspiciously, added, "Who knows? There may be spies, informers among us even here. Did you mark what yonder citizen said?"

Gillette, ever submissive to her husband, tried to affect calm, Airelle supporting her, whispering little words of soothing and endearment.

"In Paris," Isaye went on cautiously, "matters are worse than ever. No one dare shed a tear for *her*," — here his voice trembled and his own eyes grew moist, — "whilst the monster she rid us of is extolled to the skies. But go home, good wife; I will follow presently."

All that day Gillette kept her bed, moaning as one bereft of sense. Never except in childbirth had she thus consented to remain idle. She said and believed that her heart was broken.

"My baby, my pretty one!" she would break forth from time to time. "Instead of bridal robe, the red gown of the malefactor; instead of wedding ring, the executioner's rope binding her little hands. I seem to kiss them now — those little hands — as she crowed in my arms. 'Mamma! mamma!' she tried to say, then hid her sweet face on my shoulder, playing hide and seek. Oh, Holy Mother, have pity!"

Isaye, Airelle, Elie, could only coax and persuade and press upon her food and drink, striving to heal the mind by caring for the body. At intervals she would lie still, then break forth piteously as before: —

"Her little hands tied behind her back, her head thrown into the basket, soul unshriven, body cast into unconsecrated ground. Charlotte, Charlotte, what were the bad man's crimes to you? Why did you not come here, try to forget them, near your second mother? We would have cosseted you well, my baby, my nursling! —"

Thus she wailed till Father Patrix and his acolyte bustled up. No need to tell Gillette their errand! Turning her face to the wall,

burying her head under the bedclothes, she ceased her moaning for a while, cowed, awe-struck. Reciting a Latin formula, the priest now sprinkled holy water upon walls, floor, furniture, every object that the Charlotte of bygone days had touched. As the dismal office drew to a close, Gillette beckoned Airelle and whispered in her ear. The schoolgirl's last gift — that little flower-piece in water-colour — must be taken down and exorcised; the next moment it was caught to the foster mother's lips. Hugging the relic as a living thing, she made it doubly dear, blurring, blotting the picture with her tears.

This was the first public appearance of Father Patrix for some months. Truth to tell, the worthy curé, with many another just now, was sedulously hiding his light under a bushel. The Convention had said, "Swear allegiance to the Constitution or quit the black frock." Father Patrix made tacit reply, "To the Evil One with your Constitution, as you are pleased to call it! I retain my black frock, but am all for Fleur-de-lis, the Ancien Régime, and the invader."

The head of a worthy priest in a remote

country village was not considered necessary to the public weal. And heads as obstinate were too common! National perverseness and Gallic incapacity for compromise lay without doubt at the root of such behaviour. Father Patrix was given time for reflection, especially as the devotion of his parishioners was well known. Patriotism might inflame these good farming folks, but Isaye, Gillette, and the rest would never suffer hands to be laid on their confessor. They saw his little weaknesses, they by no means regarded him as a saint; but a curé is a curé, and as such to be respected. Where, sirrah, shall we look for virtue and piety if a priest can be haled to prison like a thief or deserter?

A day or two later came Eudeline, now pastor of a village two leagues off. Airelle met him on the border of the wide, unenclosed meadow before the house. The pair walked a few steps in silence, then at once touched the very heart of things.

"She thought to save France, to avert further bloodshed," Airelle began calmly. "Her crime was prompted by love of country and fellow-countrymen."

"And —" the word 'criminal' was on his lips; he added instead, "the victim of self-devotion will be judged very differently by and by."

"In her own eyes, — I knew her so well," replied Airelle, — "the act was martyrdom in a sacred cause. Ah! if only the spirit of self-sacrifice were under control, if the heroic and the magnanimous could ever realize the greatest sacrifice of all, the necessity of endurance as well as of daring."

"The times are to blame," he went on. "The mad, mad times! who and what shall mend them? Alas! not the Charlottes, the death-dealing knife —" He stopped short, checked by her look of anguish.

"Why must man so belittle, so calumniate the Eternal?" she cried. "Those fearful doctrines that rend my poor mother's heart, anathema, purgatory, perpetual torment, these things do not trouble me. But the blood-stained act, the horror clinging to her beloved name! I can never forget, life can never be the same." She covered her eyes with her hands, as if to shut out some hair-bristling reality.

"One word about ourselves," he said, in an eager undertone. Already two years of your widowhood have passed. Fondly as you cling to your parents, your life, the inner life alone worthy of the name is solitary — mine, too, except when we are together. Why such desolation, such clinging to a burden unbearable to both?

Airelle shook her head, with a look he could not misread. Then she met his glance, this time partly consoling him. What need of words? her face said. She added, very gently: —

"I have never hidden the truth from you, but the happiness you speak of would be too dearly purchased. They have lost their Charlotte, my poor father and mother! Must they lose me too? In their eyes, I should be the wife of one they respect, one who is upright and blameless, but a heretic."

Sorrowful as was their mood, both laughed aloud. The thing was too pitiful, too childish, a mere piece of unreason, but it was true. Revolution had taught Isaye and Gillette, with others, many a wholesome lesson, hardly as yet its first and greatest: the doc-

trine of tolerance in spiritual matters, that a man's conscience, his thinking power, is as much his own as the features with which Nature has endowed him, the lendings bought of hosier and hatter. For this and other happy consummations lovers and the world must patiently wait.

After a momentary hand-clasp, and one long look of perfect understanding, they parted, each taking opposite way. Through the hot, shadowless, waterless landscape Eudeline wended, dwelling on the recent tragedy and awful cloud darkening the moral world, returning again and again to the triumphant thought: "She loves me, she loves me; sooner or later she will be mine!"

Duty would lighten the daily round, duty and the upholding of love, the deepest, truest, best, because born of self-sacrifice. As Airelle renounced happiness for her parents' sake, so had he immolated worldly prospects for Judith's sake. In so far as his fireside was concerned, the burden taken up with so many misgivings had proved quite bearable. The Judith now mistress of a little parsonage was no longer the Judith of former days. The

rude envelope put on, fashioned of her own free will, gradually fell away. Enforced drudgery of half a lifetime might roughen her hands, render gipsy-like her complexion, subjection might render her automatic, the gently-bred nature, the high spirit remained. Every day his mother grew more companionable, less rustic; every day their relations became easier.

Airelle, too, was unmindful of the overpowering sultriness as she strolled back to the farmhouse. Keenest anguish in her case also alternated with thoughts of peace and consolation. Her dream-Charlotte had vanished; in the room of a fondly-cherished memory must remain horror and shrinking; the Charlotte of proudest memories was replaced by a figure as beauteous to look at but hemmed round with awful circumstance. Nothing could shut out the vision; neither time nor change, gladness nor mourning take from its dread and pitifulness. Their Charlotte they beheld with the mind's eye still; the lofty brow, penetrating glance, the sweet yet implacable mouth; the shadow of another would ever rise between them and their darling, a phantom, blood-stained, clad in homicide's livery, the face

sublime, yet terrible in its expression of triumphant vengeance. Softer thoughts followed. With Airelle as with Eudeline, duty would lighten hard routine; love born of self-sacrifice shed a cheering ray on narrow well-beaten paths.

And hope led on, — hope the highest because it was impersonal; hope in the cause for which Charlotte had sinned and died.